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Mr C Gill
Shawley Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Gill

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 June 2009 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five parts of lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average. Achievement is good.

- Attainment on entry to the Reception class is below the expected level. Good progress across the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 means that standards are broadly average at the end of Year 2. Overall, pupils achieve well from this point onwards, so that pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to reach above average standards.
- The school has taken concerted action over the last year to tackle shortcomings in provision and halt a decline in national test results. As a result of the school's efforts, standards have increased, although the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is not as great as the school originally predicted.
- While most groups of pupils make similar progress to others, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few from minority ethnic backgrounds, progress is still variable, reflecting some inconsistencies in the

quality of teaching and learning. The very small minority of pupils whose attendance is below 90% are making satisfactory, rather than good, progress.

- Attitudes towards English are positive. Pupils say that they particularly like the variety of activities within lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Key features of teaching and learning make an important contribution to pupils' good progress. For example, teachers give pupils many opportunities to talk about ideas with a partner. Cooperation is focused and mature, including where boys are teamed with girls. When suggestions are not readily forthcoming, the chance for a quick exchange of thoughts with a classmate prompts examples to share with the whole group. This strategy is a good vehicle for promoting speaking and listening skills and extending vocabulary. The use of drama has the same benefits and is much appreciated by pupils.
- Imaginative topics engage pupils' interest, especially when there is humour and they are kept in suspense. A high level of interest and excitement provides fertile ground for the analysis of text and character for older pupils. Nevertheless, tasks are not yet always as varied as they should be to meet the differing needs of pupils, and especially to provide greater demands on the more able.
- While behaviour during lessons is good, there is some occasional low level restlessness, especially among boys. A change of activity sometimes very successfully re-engages pupils' attention, but this restlessness is not always dealt with directly and quickly enough in order to avoid a slowing in progress.
- Assessment is good with careful tracking of pupils' attainment to identify those in need of additional support. Intervention work is promoted well through good liaison between key staff. Moderation of assessments has been valuable in creating greater confidence in evaluating pupils' attainment and ensuring that targets are realistic as well as challenging.
- Marking and feedback are consistently developmental. Comments target not only content, but also important 'secretarial' aspects, such as punctuation, handwriting and presentation. It is not always clear, however, how pupils follow up corrections to spelling to make sure they are accurate in the future.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- A thoroughly planned curriculum ensures all aspects of English receive well balanced coverage. Consistency has been gained through joint planning within key stages.
- Achievement is enhanced by substantial opportunities to write at length in all year groups and in a wide range of genre. The school has ensured that drama is now used fully as a stimulus for writing. There is a consistent approach to

guided reading, teaching handwriting, and the improvement of spelling through regular work completed at home.

- Children receive a good grounding in early language and literacy skills in the Reception class. Imaginative topics and interesting resources act as powerful stimuli for discussion and writing. There is constant encouragement during written tasks and timely reminders, about capital letters for example. The strong focus on the promotion of letter sounds for younger pupils has now been extended into Years 1 and 2, and beyond where necessary.
- The promotion of literacy skills through other subjects is developing. History is well used in some year groups, and so is science. Opportunities to make pop-up books draw well on other subjects and provide the chance to be imaginative and creative. The school is well aware, however, that links between subjects are still relatively underdeveloped, including the use of information and communication technology.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of English are good.

- English is led with energy and enthusiasm, and there is a clear focus on increasing academic performance. The success of the school's work is reflected in improvements to academic performance in English over the course of this year, and leadership is clear where further improvement is required.
- Developmental priorities arise directly from the information provided by detailed monitoring, including discussion with pupils and observation of lessons. These checks have prompted much of the improvement since the last inspection and led to termly priorities relating, for example, to punctuation and handwriting. They have also given staff valuable individual feedback.
- Planning is well focused on key priorities related to provision and achievement, although there are no criteria recorded for judging the success of initiatives.
- Much work has been undertaken to gain greater consistency in English, particularly given the many staff changes and the relatively large proportion of teachers who are inexperienced and new to the profession. More experienced staff have been carefully deployed within key stage teams to improve planning and teaching.
- Data is used well to track individuals, and also boys, girls and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has now highlighted the need to do the same for other groups, such as those eligible for free school meals.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that lessons are adapted more frequently to match the needs of pupils with different abilities, and especially to offer greater challenge to the more able

- increasing the links between English and other subjects in order to extend the use and development of pupils' literacy skills.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies
Additional Inspector