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Mr I Smith  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 June 2009 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit included a focus on our current survey theme of spelling and handwriting. 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 three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in English is good. Standards at both key stages are broadly average.

- In 2008, pupils in Year 2 reached standards which were just above average and stronger in reading than writing. Pupils made good progress from their starting points which were below average.
- The results for Year 6 in 2008 are still being contested by the school. These provisional results show standards which are broadly average overall. Girls did comparatively less well than boys. However, pupils reached the targets set for them at Level 4 and made at least satisfactory progress.

- The school's assessment data for the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils indicates that they are on track to achieve the targets set for them and to reach average standards. This would equate to good progress.
- In the lessons observed, pupils made generally good progress. They understood what they had to do and worked purposefully together in pairs and groups. Although many spoke confidently in front of their class, a minority were nervous despite teachers' encouragement and said very little.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and generally match work to pupils' prior attainment. They have good subject knowledge.
- Lessons had a good range of activities with the best challenging pupils through sharply focused tasks which required them to think and to justify their opinions.
- Teachers use white boards well to structure lessons and make them interesting through the use of film and visual materials.
- Assessment is good. Teachers use success criteria very effectively to set expectations for pupils and as a basis for assessing their progress. Teachers' marking is thorough, related to objectives and provides guidance for pupils on what to improve. However, the setting of individual targets is not always as clear.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is broad and covers a good range of texts and genres, including non fiction and some media topics.
- There is a good focus on developing reading and pupils usually have better reading than writing skills.
- The teaching of phonics is a strong focus in the early years and the school acknowledges the need to extend this into Key Stage 2.
- Teachers increasingly use speaking, listening and drama activities to promote confidence and develop language skills.
- Opportunities for extended writing are successfully planned into broader themes. Pupils enjoy writing using the detailed information provided through these topics.
- Opportunities to use computers and modern technologies in lessons vary between classes.

### Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The subject leader is well organised and sets a clear direction based on a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in English.
- The monitoring of provision is thorough with a strong focus on current priorities. The outcomes are carefully evaluated to identify areas for further action.
- There is a strong awareness of the need to challenge pupils at different levels and to provide support to consolidate their basic skills.
- In a short time, the subject leader's clear agenda for improvement has begun to have an impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

### Spelling and handwriting

- Pupils' work is generally well presented and most write neatly and increasingly fluently.
- The school's literacy policy contains appropriate guidance on the teaching of spelling and handwriting. Currently, although there is a recommended approach to how pupils should develop their spelling, teachers use a range of different methods to support them and this creates inconsistency as they move from year to year.
- Pupils have generic targets which cover spelling and teachers promote spelling where relevant in their teaching and marking.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that teachers' marking identifies specific targets for pupils and provides them with the opportunity to improve their work
- developing the curriculum to include greater coverage of modern media and technologies
- ensuring that teachers adopt consistent approaches to teaching spelling.

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

Martin Cragg  
Her Majesty's Inspector