

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



03 July 2009

Mr K Reid
Headteacher
Burgh by Sands School
Burgh by Sands
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA5 6AP

Dear Mr Reid

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 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

Standards in English are broadly average. Achievement has improved and is now good.

- In both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, standards are broadly average in writing and above average in reading.
- Standards have recovered after two years' test results indicated that pupils had not made sufficient progress in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Progress in Key Stage 2 is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to reading and writing. They enjoy their lessons and work purposefully in small groups and pairs as well as individually. They are very well-behaved and lessons proceed smoothly with the focus firmly on the learning in hand.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- In all the lessons observed, teaching and learning was of at least a good quality. Typically, relationships between staff and pupils were excellent, lessons had a clear focus and they moved along at a good pace.
- The most effective teaching featured objectives for pupils' learning which were very clear. The teachers' use of imaginative and interactive methods enthused pupils to tackle challenging work. Consequently, they were very industrious and productive. They made extremely good gains in learning.
- Pupils' books show that there is, at times, a rather heavy reliance on worksheets which are not always closely matched to pupils' different learning needs.
- Day to day assessment of learning is good, with much good marking that helps pupils know, quite clearly and precisely, how well they have done and how to improve their work.
- The setting of targets for the next steps in pupils' learning is generally good and pupils enjoy seeing the progress they are making as targets are reached at frequent intervals.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The provision for writing has improved. This has had a significantly positive effect on pupils' achievement and their enjoyment of learning.
- The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced. Reading and writing are taught systematically. However, once pupils are competent readers, although they are successfully encouraged to read, there is little guidance to help them develop further as readers.
- Staff use a good range of intervention programmes to support pupils who need extra help or who appear at risk of underachieving.
- Pupils have opportunities for drama within the basic curriculum and in productions but limited attention is given to media education.
- Some written work is set in a cross-curricular context which adds to its relevance for pupils. That said, the development and use of literacy skills across subjects is not planned systematically at whole-school level.
- The curriculum is enriched for example with a drama club, poetry competitions and celebration of World Book Day.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management of the provision in English are satisfactory.

- The improvement in standards and pupils' progress this year shows the impact of better leadership and management.
- Staff have been supported successfully in the introduction of the new approaches to teaching writing, including through additional training.
- Monitoring of English throughout the school is sufficiently thorough. It ensures that underachievement is now nipped in the bud.
- There are plans for improving provision in English but they are sketchy with little to indicate what will be done to achieve the objectives or how the effectiveness of any steps taken will be evaluated.

Spelling and handwriting

- The school does not have whole-school policies and guidance on the teaching of spelling and handwriting. Nevertheless, these aspects are taught in all classes and pupils reach broadly average standards in them.
- Pupils use tried and tested methods for spelling. These include, using mnemonics to remember the spelling of irregular words and learning phonically regular strings of letters. Their knowledge of spelling rules is limited.
- Most pupils develop a reasonably fluent joined script by the time they leave the school but staff do not check that their handwriting is sufficiently fluent and accurate at speed to meet the demands of secondary school.
- In English books, teachers mark spelling and sometimes comment on handwriting. In other subjects they sometimes accept standards of handwriting and spelling which are lower than the same pupils reach in their English work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- further raising standards in writing
- improving the curriculum by planning more rigorously for pupils to develop and use literacy skills across the curriculum and instituting whole-school policies on the development of spelling and handwriting
- improving the quality of subject plans in English.

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

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector