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Ms B Simpson
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Simpson

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 December 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 included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good with some outstanding features.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Standards in English have improved in recent years although results at the end of Key Stage 2 have remained variable. However, results in 2009 were broadly in line with the national average and predictions for 2010 suggest that these standards will be at least maintained.
- Given that standards on entry have tended to be below average and that the school receives significant numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language, these results confirm good progress overall in English. Some pupils who have only recently joined the school make exceptional progress in English.

- Performance data suggest that girls have tended to achieve more highly than boys in English in recent years. However, the 2009 results show that boys achieved well and that the gender gap was substantially less than average in both reading and writing. The school was also successful in achieving above-average numbers of pupils who reached the higher Level 5 in English.
- Well-targeted intervention enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to achieve as well as other pupils.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy English lessons, including the Big Writing lessons and group reading sessions. They welcome the variety and challenge in lessons and say that teachers make learning fun in English. Attitudes to learning were extremely positive in lessons observed and pupils behaved very well.
- The quality of teaching was good overall in the lessons observed, with some that was outstanding. Teachers planned in great detail and made good use of a range of lively activities. Visual resources were used well to motivate pupils and support their literacy work. Relationships were extremely strong and teachers had high expectations of pupils' behaviour. In the most effective lessons, learning was promoted by very good subject knowledge, enthusiastic teaching and good modelling of writing.
- Teachers made good use of helpful success criteria for pupils in lessons, although the overall aims identified by teachers were not always as clear or productive. Good support was provided for writing, including plans that supported pupils' extended writing well. However, at times, these constrained opportunities by more able pupils to work independently.
- There is consistent use by teachers of individual targets for pupils that help them to know how to improve. Review of pupils' work is built imaginatively into regular timetabled discussion sessions with pupils, which they value. Marking is clear in providing feedback about areas of weakness but teachers do not always identify strengths in pupils' work or link the areas for improvement with pupils' individual targets.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- There are a number of innovative features to the English curriculum that help pupils to enjoy lessons and make good progress. For example, the weekly Philosophy lessons give pupils good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- The school has developed its own group reading programme, called Reciprocal teaching. This is well structured and enables pupils to work collaboratively and develop leadership skills. Pupils enjoy the sessions and

the programme introduces them to a wide range of texts, although opportunities for promoting independent reading are more limited.

- Very good provision is made for extended writing through a well-planned programme. Writing is also promoted very well through frequent opportunities for pupils to publish their work.
- Pupils enjoy English because teachers use good-quality, stimulating books for children. They also use books with strong pictures that will motivate pupils and support those with English as an additional language.
- Information and communication technology is used well by pupils, for instance, in working at home and in initiatives such as recent pupil pod-casting stimulated by a book they were reading.
- Enrichment activities make a very good contribution to pupils' work in English through visitors to the school, including writers, the annual 'Poetry Slam', and the Year 6 school play.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- Senior leaders ensure that literacy has a high profile in the school. For example, the entrance lobby contains good examples of pupils' writing and the display screen emphasises to both pupils and parents the importance of reading and writing. As a result, pupils are keen to do well in English and understand the importance of good literacy.
- There is a very strong sense of direction to English work in the school. The curriculum is distinctive and engages both boys and girls well. Thoughtful leadership ensures that initiatives and programmes are modified so that they meet pupils' needs effectively.
- The progress of pupils across the different aspects of English is monitored carefully and interventions made where necessary. Monitoring and evaluation are very thorough and based around a clear yearly timetable. Lesson observation, work sampling and reviews of planning are systematic and provide good feedback on areas for development, both at an individual level and across the school.
- The whole-school approach to assessment is thorough and clear. It is also communicated well to parents and pupils.

Spelling and handwriting

The school emphasises the importance of good spelling and handwriting through a clear policy and regular teaching across all classes. Standards of presentation and handwriting are good. Spelling is taught and assessed consistently in all classes and good support is provided through displays and word lists. However, although spelling is taught frequently in separate sessions, opportunities to correct or reinforce spelling in the context of extended writing are often missed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards in English further by:
 - making more effective use of clear aims in lessons that provide direction to pupils' learning
 - reviewing approaches to the feedback given by teachers to pupils in marking
 - implementing strategies to promote wider independent reading by pupils.

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 and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett
Her Majesty's Inspector