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Ms M Broughton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Broughton

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 9 November 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included meetings with staff and pupils, scrutiny of documentation and pupils' work and observation of 11 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory and improving.

- Standards of attainment are well below average but have risen.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall from very low starting points. The rate of progress has accelerated recently, particularly in reading, as a result of more effective teaching. Well-managed interventions have ensured that all groups of pupils are making better progress.
- Progress in writing is slower than in reading, especially for boys, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. There are significant obstacles to overcome. Younger pupils observed were hesitant in speaking and early

writing; older pupils sometimes lacked the confidence to take risks, express reasoned views or improve their work independently.

- Learning in lessons observed was generally good and pupils are keen to do their best.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching is good.

- Pupils usually have a good understanding of what they are learning, because teachers explain objectives to them simply, adapt tasks to their needs well and successfully involve them in evaluating their progress.
- Much more of the teaching observed was good than satisfactory. The most successful lessons motivated pupils to reach higher standards in talking and writing by involving them in intriguing scenarios and role-play. Some very skilful questioning drew out pupils' spoken language. Effective teamwork with support staff enabled every pupil to participate orally as fully as possible.
- In a few cases, pupils were less actively engaged and stimulated to talk and write at a suitably high level. This was sometimes because learning objectives were not focused clearly enough on the needs of the pupils.
- Teachers assess progress regularly. Most marking gives pupils helpful feedback which makes clear what they need to do next. Notably in Year 6, pupils have been given time to act on the guidance with a positive effect. However, some feedback is too vague.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features.

- Learning about sounds and letters is linked productively to reading and writing. However, indoor and outdoor activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage have mixed success in tempting the youngest learners to talk and explore early writing. This is currently a priority for development.
- The scheme of work is suitably adapted to pupils' needs and interests. Older pupils say lessons are lively and varied. There are regular visits and visitors, and good use of strong links to community groups. Pupils enjoy the books and poems they have shared in class and special events like visiting the public library. Parents are welcomed to join in early learning activities and helped to support independent reading at home.
- Early identification of individual needs leads to a wide range of interventions. Individual monitoring shows a positive impact, for example, on reading and spelling skills and the progress made by pupils new to English.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The leadership and management of English are good.

- Planning for improvement is based securely on good monitoring and evaluation by the subject coordinator and senior staff.
- Professional development has led to better teaching in the areas of English where pupils have most need. For example, teachers trained to use drama use it well to engage boys and improve writing.
- Several teachers were new to the school in September. Induction and teamwork with experienced school leaders has prepared them well, but some need further help in improving pupils' writing.
- The school is making good use of external support, for example, to develop Early Years Foundation Stage provision, and recent changes have had a good impact.

## Spelling and handwriting

Pupils are taught to spell accurately and shape letters clearly. The school is aware that some pupils have little familiarity with written English, so teaching is explicit. As they grow older, pupils sound out unfamiliar spellings for themselves, learn to use dictionaries, and collect corrected spellings in a personal book. Standards in these aspects of writing are not significantly below average.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- accelerating progress in writing through:
  - developing effective stimuli for talk and writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - providing consistently high-quality activities to prepare older pupils for writing
  - giving pupils clearer feedback on their writing and more responsibility for responding to it
- ensuring effective opportunities for teachers to learn from existing good practice.

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

Susan Bowles  
Her Majesty's Inspector