

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



14 December 2009

Mr P Smyth  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Hornchurch Drive  
Chorley  
Lancashire  
PR7 2RJ

Dear Mr Smyth

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

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

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Standards are consistently above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Able pupils do well and large numbers reach Level 5 in English by the end of Year 6. Standards are better in reading than writing, especially for higher-attaining pupils.
- Attainment on entry to Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with average. Progress throughout the school is good and some pupils achieve very highly. Performance data over the past three years show that the progress of boys and girls is broadly the same, except in writing, and that pupils

with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress.

- Progress in the lessons observed was good overall. Pupils are very well behaved and keen to do well. They work well together and show initiative, where opportunities are provided. Many pupils speak confidently and with maturity.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy English lessons, especially reading activities and drama; they say that teachers make learning fun.
- Lessons observed were good overall and the quality of some teaching was outstanding. Relationships were good and lessons were planned well. In particular, teachers provided well for the needs of pupils through additional support and differentiated materials. In the most effective teaching, pupils were motivated by clear learning objectives, lively activities such as role-play, and high expectations that enabled them to make very good progress.
- Assessment is good. There is a consistent approach to individual targets in writing for pupils that enables them to identify the next steps in their learning. Progress is reviewed regularly with teachers. Most marking is thorough and positive. The best is very effective in helping pupils to understand their areas of weakness but some teachers miss opportunities to point out more clearly how pupils' work can be improved.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Pupils enjoy reading and this is supported well by the good library facilities and a wide range of texts throughout school.
- There is a clear and well-structured scheme of work for English across all key stages. The curriculum is broad, balanced and engaging. There are particular strengths in the use of information and communication technology to enhance learning in English. This includes regular opportunities for pupils to use the computer suite for word processing and research. Pupils also use media technology to enhance their work, for instance, adding images to a presentation or creating 'graphic' stories.
- Enrichment activities support work in English very well. There have been recent visits by writers, story tellers, illustrators and poets to work with pupils and pupils are also taken to the theatre from time to time. The school encourages reading through Book Week and other events and competitions, sometimes promoted by the local authority. There is an ambitious, annual drama performance by pupils. The subject leader responds positively to external activities that might stimulate work in

English. For example, pupils took part in, and won, a national writing competition linked to the stories of Hans Christian Andersen.

- Links with other subjects are planned well and provide support for the development of pupils' literacy, for example, through good-quality extended writing in history or religious education.
- The school operates a good programme of additional support for pupils who need extra help.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- The subject leader is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. She models very good practice in her own teaching and sets high expectations.
- The English policy is detailed and helpful. It establishes a clear sense of direction for work in English. Self-evaluation is secure and accurate. An annual programme of monitoring activities provides good evidence about teaching, learning, planning and pupils' writing as well as gaining insight into pupils' attitudes towards English. These activities are used well to extend effective teaching and learning. This very thorough programme contributes to a focused and clear improvement plan in English that identifies a realistic and appropriate series of actions for developing writing.
- The school evaluates the impact of its intervention programme effectively and makes appropriate changes as a result. This process is managed well.
- Guidance is provided for parents in supporting reading and writing at home. In addition, the school is beginning to develop its website as a resource to help pupils develop their independent work in English outside school.

### Spelling and handwriting

The school has a clear handwriting policy, supported by regular handwriting sessions for younger pupils. Standards of handwriting and presentation are mostly good and intervention is provided for individual pupils where necessary. The school is currently reviewing its approach to spelling following the publication of new materials by the National Strategy. At present, spelling rules and patterns are taught explicitly across the school. Some teachers make use of spelling books for pupils and differentiated tests. Correction of mistakes through marking is variable. Teachers and pupils do not routinely follow up spelling mistakes in pupils' work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving standards in writing, especially for boys at the higher levels.

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