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28 September 2009

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Dear Mr Corn

Ofsted survey inspection programme – English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 September 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 had a particular 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 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 is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Despite a dip in standards in the provisional results for Key Stage 2 in 2009, attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Most pupils achieve the expected level in English and larger than average numbers reach the higher Level 5.
- Standards are higher in reading than in writing. A large proportion of pupils reach Level 5 in reading but too few do so in writing.

- Standards on entry to the school in English are broadly in line with, or slightly above, the national average, except in writing. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been consistently around the national average, suggesting satisfactory progress. Progress in Key Stage 2 is good, leading to above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Recent results suggest that boys achieve as well as girls in English. This is better than the national picture. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as other groups.
- Pupils' progress in the lessons observed was at least satisfactory, with some variability, reflecting the differences in the quality of teaching. All pupils are keen to learn, try hard and work well together.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils' views of English are broadly positive. They like lessons featuring drama and role-play and enjoy reading. They are less enthusiastic about lessons where they spend too long on the same topic or where teachers talk too much.
- The teaching observed varied in quality but was never less than satisfactory. Relationships are good and teachers manage classes well. As a result, behaviour is very good. Lessons are varied with pupils being actively engaged in paired work and on a range of tasks. In the Year 6 lesson, pupils especially enjoyed a well managed role-play exercise and made good progress because of very strong relationships and the teacher's good subject knowledge.
- Pupils are supported well by teaching assistants and other adults in the classroom. However, guided group work is not planned consistently across classes to support pupils' writing.
- Pupils' work is marked in detail and the best marking gives pupils clear feedback on how to improve their writing. All teachers select a target level for groups of pupils to achieve by the end of the year and identify the different elements of that target. However, pupils do not always understand what they need to do in the shorter term to improve their work. This also reflects the fact that too little marking focuses directly on the targets set.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is good.

- Most pupils enjoy English and the curriculum enables them to make good progress. The whole-school curriculum has some innovative features, such as the Creative Curriculum sessions, although the curriculum in English largely follows the national guidance. However, pupils have recently had good opportunities to write their own book and produce an animation film.

- The reading curriculum is very strong and enables pupils to reach high standards. Improvements to resources have included the provision of an attractive school library. The school takes part in National Book Week and other events to encourage reading. Parents and carers are given guidance on supporting children with their reading and other aspects of work in English.
- The good links between English and other subject areas support the development of pupils' literacy well. For example, an Enterprise project involved pupils in producing, marketing and performing a pantomime.
- Enrichment activities also contribute well to pupils' progress in English. These include trips outside school, as well as regular visits by writers and poets. There are some particularly good displays around the school, including a writers' corner, that include examples of pupils' writing across a range of genres.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

- The capacity for further improvement in English is good. The school acknowledges that standards are not as high in English as in mathematics or science, and that pupils are capable of doing even better in writing. It has already identified writing as the main priority in the improvement plan. The subject leader is a knowledgeable and effective English teacher and is in a good position to drive forward developments.
- The school has focused strongly on further improving teaching and learning. Many lesson observations have taken place to provide feedback for teachers. At present, however, these do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on learning.
- Evaluation and monitoring procedures in English are thorough and provide good evidence for self-evaluation. The progress of different groups of pupils is monitored systematically, through regular lesson observations, and the review of pupils' work and teachers' plans. Pupils have good opportunities to provide feedback, by completing questionnaires and taking part in discussions about English with their teachers.
- The school has already identified writing as its key priority, together with other areas for development, such as poetry. Currently, the improvement plans are not clear enough in identifying the key actions that will have the most impact on raising standards in writing.

Spelling and handwriting

Policies for both spelling and handwriting have been revised recently. Practice in teaching spelling is consistent across all classes and includes regular spelling tests and differentiated spelling lists to be learnt. Pupils also keep an individual record of words they need to learn. However, teachers' marking varies in the extent to which mistakes in spelling are corrected and it is not always clear how pupils are expected to respond to feedback. Standards of

handwriting are variable. In a small number of cases, pupils need additional support to make their handwriting more fluent.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

Improving standards of writing, especially the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 by:

- using more effective learning objectives that place a stronger emphasis on pupils' progress in lessons
- providing better feedback to pupils on how they can improve the quality of their writing
- giving clearer guidance on how guided writing sessions can promote pupils' work
- ensuring more consistent practice across the school in using a drafting book for writing.

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

Philip Jarrett
Her Majesty's Inspector