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Mrs S Audsley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Audsley

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 11 January 2010 to look at work in English.

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, governors and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, a learning walk and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- The pupils' attainment on entry is below average, but standards attained in national tests of reading and writing have been significantly higher than expected by the end of Year 6 for the past two years.
- The standard of work seen was impressive; pupils read capably for their age and many express themselves well in speech and writing.
- Pupils' progress has improved strongly over the past few years. Rich opportunities to use their well-taught literacy skills have helped the younger children to catch up with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1. From this secure base, pupils in Key Stage 2 make progress at a rate which ranks alongside the best in the country.

- All groups of pupils, including the more vulnerable, enjoy English and make good or better progress. The typical national gap between boys' and girls' achievement has been narrowed at this school.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy English and talk enthusiastically about what they learn through a great variety of lively and purposeful activities. Teaching has a consistent quality across the school which leads to excellent progress.
- The very good relationships between teachers, other adults and pupils lead to good participation, concentration and hard work.
- Teachers use a variety of effective strategies to ensure all pupils move forward at a good pace. They use resources well to meet pupils' different learning needs. Modern technology is used well, for example, to help pupils notice clues in texts and to record role-play.
- Objectives for lessons are sometimes not clear enough about exactly what pupils are expected to learn. This results in pupils being less certain in some lessons about how to do tasks well or what they had learned.
- Strengths of assessment include thorough monitoring of individual progress and personal, constructive feedback to pupils on all aspects of English, including speaking and listening. Pupils evaluate their own and each others' work seriously. They understand how to work on their targets for improvement, which teachers regularly update.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Very clear guidelines for staff carefully detail the provision for each aspect of the subject, the wide range of enrichment opportunities and the comprehensive programme of extra support for those who need it.
- The curriculum is very effective in fostering skill and confidence in reading. Understanding of letters and engagement with stories and books are established early. A broad programme of reading activities is sustained through the age range, supported by a well-used library and the involvement of parents and volunteers.
- The school has recently developed its provision for writing. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff make good use of indoor and outdoor activities to involve pupils in talk, make believe and mark making. Pupils write regularly, at length, for a wide range of purposes and using a variety of media. Spelling and handwriting are discretely taught. For each class, regular visits, visitors and special events provide distinctive and compelling reasons to communicate well.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- The leadership team expresses a very clear sense of direction for English, and gives the subject a high profile. Sustained work with staff has established a literacy-led curriculum which meets the needs of the pupils very well. As a result, standards have risen substantially over the past four years.
- You and the subject leader monitor and evaluate the subject rigorously, using progress data, observation, talk with pupils and regular scrutiny of all pupils' work to identify where progress could be better. A special feature is that every pupil and teacher receives personal feedback on their next priorities.
- Provision is continuously being refined, producing a consistently high-quality experience for pupils. Staff expertise in areas such as early reading and information and communication technology is effectively shared. All staff have opportunities for training in priority areas, resulting in confident and effective teamwork in the classroom.
- The whole-school improvement plan identifies scope to improve achievement still further. Governors have supported investment in a new library, enrichment and support and are involved in evaluating developments.

Areas for improvement

No areas for improvement were identified beyond those the school has set itself. In considering these, we discussed how pupils' learning and progress in lessons might be reflected when providing feedback to teachers, and ways to foster pupils' interest in a wider range of reading.

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 available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector