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Ms J Storey  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Storey

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 17 March 2010 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 provision for gifted and talented pupils 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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Pupils' attainment is below average, particularly in writing, although pupils' current work shows signs of improvement.
- When they join the school, many children have language skills far lower than is normal. Their speaking and listening develop well because adults draw them into talk as they explore a wealth of interesting activities. More than a third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and effective interventions ensure they make good progress.

- In recent years, other pupils have made progress at the expected rate. When they take national tests in Year 6, fewer achieve Level 5 in English than in mathematics or science.
- Following a concerted drive to improve levels of literacy, the standard of pupils' work is improving. The school's monitoring shows that more pupils than previously are making good progress in both reading and writing. This is more clearly evident for younger pupils.
- Attitudes to learning are generally positive, but, for many, unclear handwriting and weak spelling are an obstacle to progress.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- A strength seen widely in lessons was careful planning to meet pupils' different needs, based on close day-to-day assessment. Teachers work well as a team with other adults in the classroom, who have been trained well to support learning in small groups.
- Adults regularly involve pupils in purposeful talk about their writing and give them opportunities to evaluate and improve it. Some teaching observed was outstandingly motivating. It made excellent use of modelling and gave pupils a leading role in learning. In these lessons, teachers make learning fun, take any opportunity to add extra challenge and use pupils' responses well to deepen understanding. Their very strong relationship with pupils inspires enjoyment and builds confidence.
- When progress was satisfactory, teachers were less successful in involving pupils in purposeful collaboration or independent work, so motivation was less well sustained.
- Marking and feedback contribute well to progress, because they are well focused on the next steps the pupils need to take. Pupils are given time to refine their work, and teachers check their improvement.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Teaching plans are consistently well focused on the needs of pupils and imaginative in engaging their interest. While carefully checking that they cover core requirements, teachers tailor their plans creatively to ensure challenge and appeal. Attitudes to the subject vary, but pupils enjoy the wide range of experiences offered, from exploring Shakespeare to using modern media technology.
- The school is giving particular priority to developing pupils' confidence as writers. Building on the school's tradition of creative partnerships, teachers stimulate pupils to write through a rich variety of experiences, such as exploring a dinosaur nest in the drama studio. Well-focused paired and small group talk helps pupils to plan or refine their writing. Teachers explain the principles of writing clearly, and pupils practise their skills in

many contexts; for example, what has been learned in science turns into an opportunity for descriptive writing.

- A wide range of interventions and extra activities is targeted at pupils' particular needs and the impact is carefully reviewed.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- A good depth of subject knowledge informs the school's ambitious and adventurous vision for the subject. This has been translated into a rich curriculum and increasingly effective approaches to teaching.
- Leaders and managers use a good range of evidence to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the subject accurately.
- Staff benefit from incisive feedback and are reflective about the impact of their work. They are involved in piloting and evaluating new approaches, have relevant training and support each other in refining their practice.
- Targets are challenging and clear plans for raising attainment are being implemented energetically. This has led to provision which has very good features and which has strengthened progress. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistent enough to secure significantly higher standards of attainment and good progress for all.

### Provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

The improvement in progress seen over the past year is evident for gifted and talented pupils, who have not always fulfilled their potential in the past. This has been achieved by enriching provision, sharpening teachers' focus on the need of the minority of higher attaining pupils from an early age, and emphasising independence. Extended projects promote independent use of thinking and communication skills. Able pupils are sometimes grouped together for work. In Year 5, for example, a teacher engaged them in higher level discussion about how they could bring Hamlet's story to a resolution. Gifted and talented pupils are regularly set a harder question or an extra challenge in their work or through marking.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the consistency of the teaching to ensure good progress for all pupils.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained previously, 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