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Ms J Kelly
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Kelly

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 2 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Standards in English have been consistently below average at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in writing are substantially poorer than reading. However, there is an upward trend in attainment. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level has increased from 52% in 2005 to 73% last year. Few pupils achieve the higher Level 5.
- Contextual value-added data show that progress has been poor in English over the past three years. Many groups of pupils have underachieved in English although some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have done better. However, the number of pupils making two

levels of progress across Key Stage 2 has increased and this trend is expected to continue in 2010.

- Progress in lessons observed was satisfactory. Behaviour was good and pupils showed a real desire to learn. They collaborated well and many pupils showed a promising ability to work independently.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- In lessons observed, relationships were strong. As a result, behaviour was good and pupils showed positive attitudes towards English. Teachers' plans revealed a good range of approaches to meeting the different learning needs of groups of pupils. Teachers used links with other subjects, music and real-life objects as a means of engaging pupils. Approaches to guided writing were consistent and pupils' work was supported well by the use of word lists and models of writing. Most classrooms are colourful and support literacy well.
- At times, pupils' learning was constrained by teachers' use of learning objectives that were too vague to provide direction in the lesson. Pace dipped at times, especially for those pupils who were engaged in independent writing.
- The work sample showed that pupils are provided with good opportunities to complete extended writing. However, the quality of presentation is too varied and there were too few occasions when pupils wrote for purposes and audiences that extended beyond the classroom.
- Assessment in English is inconsistent. The best marking is thorough and provides clear feedback on areas for improvement. However, too much marking does not show pupils what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy reading as a result of good curricular provision in this area. Older pupils speak knowledgeably about their favourite writers. Pupils respond well to the daily reading session, including both group and independent reading activities. Reflective approaches are encouraged through the use of reading journals in some classes. The school acknowledges that the libraries are currently underused.
- The importance of speaking and listening is especially recognised for younger pupils and the school is involved in the Every Child a Talker programme. Older pupils comment that there are few opportunities for drama, role-play and group discussions. The use of information and communication technology, including moving image work, to develop literacy skills varies greatly across the school.
- The school provides a good range of enrichment activities that supports work in English. This includes a variety of trips and visits for pupils, regular

theatre workshops in school, links with the local football club and support for parents' literacy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory.

- The school's leadership accepts that standards in English are not high enough and recent actions have helped to raise attainment. Subject action plans are detailed and effective in identifying how writing should be improved. However, there is too little consideration within the plans of how to enhance the teaching of English.
- Monitoring and evaluation are thorough and include a recent detailed look at the teaching of writing in all classes. However, the school's evaluations of the quality of teaching are over-generous; this partly reflects the use of an out-of-date lesson observation format that does not focus strongly enough on outcomes for pupils.

Provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

Gifted and talented pupils enjoy English although they say that lessons are not always sufficiently challenging. The school provides clear guidance on the identification of gifted and talented pupils and the use of appropriate teaching strategies. These pupils are able to access the good range of enrichment activities available for all pupils although there are few activities directly target at gifted and talented pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving standards and achievement in English, particularly in writing, by:
 - using clear and effective learning objectives to plan lessons and improve progress
 - improving the consistency of marking and assessment across the school
 - providing more challenge for the most able pupils in lessons
 - ensuring that writing tasks, where possible, involve real audiences and purposes that extend beyond the classroom.

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

Philip Jarrett
Her Majesty's Inspector