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Mr C Miller
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Miller

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 19 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 some discussion 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- In 2009, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was broadly average although all achieved the expected Level 4. Attainment in reading was above average.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 improved and was well above average.
- The school's assessment of current Year 6 pupils indicates that they are likely to improve on 2009 results, especially in writing.
- In 2009, Year 6 pupils made at least satisfactory and often good progress from the end of Key Stage 1, when their attainment was below average.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress.

- The school's monitoring of current Year 6 pupils shows that they are making good progress.
- In the lessons observed, pupils made generally good progress. They enjoyed their work and concentrated well. They worked successfully in pairs and small groups, discussing ideas enthusiastically. They spoke with confidence and listened well. Even when tasks were difficult, they persevered and did their best.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly with clear objectives. Lessons are structured well and activities are matched closely to pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy learning through drama and discussion, and write with enthusiasm.
- Teachers use challenging questions to encourage pupils to think and to respond in detail, such as when preparing questions to put to the main characters in a novel.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support to small groups in lessons, for example in writing an alternative scene for a well-known fairy tale.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide clear advice on how they should improve their work. Pupils know their targets and they are reviewed regularly. However, pupils' targets are not always emphasised enough in lessons to ensure appropriate levels of challenge.
- Pupils assess their own work or that of their peers occasionally but this is not yet a regular activity in lessons.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- There is a good balance between types of work, including non-fiction and poetry. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are equally represented and teachers plan lessons effectively to match pupils' needs. Pupils particularly enjoy learning through drama, writing creatively and using computers.
- Increasingly, writing activities are planned into other subjects or topic work. Pupils enjoy writing for real purposes or audiences, such as creating persuasive posters on dental health or bids to spend money effectively after a supermarket visit. The school plans to extend this way of working.
- There is a very effective programme of intervention with individual or small-group support provided to cater for pupils with different needs.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The subject leader has a clear vision for development based on review with teachers and a thorough audit of provision. The school has set challenging targets for improvement and the subject leader models the teaching approaches required to raise pupils' achievement.
- There is a detailed action plan with clear success criteria. Thorough evaluation of pupils' performance and regular monitoring of provision have led to accurate priorities which inform training for staff. This includes opportunities to talk to staff from very successful schools and to make visits to see outstanding practice, such as in the teaching of phonics.
- Key improvements to the teaching of phonics and writing are contributing to rising standards.

Provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

- The school identifies gifted and talented pupils promptly and has a specific programme to cater for their needs. This is supported by a clear and effective policy.
- Pupils receive regular small-group support from a qualified teacher which includes a focus on reading and writing. This provision emphasises challenging targets and allows the pupils to discuss their work in depth and to benefit from individual guidance on improving their work.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in enrichment projects such as developing the school prospectus, making a DVD and links with partner schools in this country and abroad.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the consistency of teaching and assessment by:
 - using individual targets more in lessons to ensure challenge for all pupils
 - extending opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers using the success criteria
- completing the development of curriculum planning by embedding opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills in topics and other subjects.

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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector