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Mr J Bond
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bond

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 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 and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Pupils' literacy skills are above average on entry to the school.
- Test results have been variable over the past three years. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were significantly above average in 2009 and broadly in line with average in the two previous years. Performance is better in English than in mathematics or science.
- The contextual value added (CVA) data for 2009 shows that pupils made better than satisfactory progress from Year 2 to Year 6 last year. The three year CVA picture suggests good progress in English across Key Stage 2 over that period.
- The school recognises that girls achieve more highly than boys, especially in reading. However, the gender gap narrowed last year as a result of the school's actions to improve boys' writing.

- Lessons and discussions with pupils confirmed that many pupils have good standards of speaking and listening; some pupils speak with particular maturity and confidence.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory with some good features.

- Pupils enjoy English. They behave well and are keen to learn. Older pupils especially value the interactive tasks and drama. They also appreciate the direct links between English and other subjects of the curriculum.
- In lessons observed, pupils' progress was broadly satisfactory although all lessons had good elements. The tasks chosen were appropriate and engaging, for instance, writing instructions on how to build a snowman or making a television advertisement. Relationships with teachers were good. Teachers developed speaking and listening well through a good range of pair and small group activities. Several of the lessons included effective modelling of writing and speaking by teachers.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' progress was limited by planning that did not always identify the learning clearly enough within individual lessons. This sometimes created a lack of direction in lessons and tasks for pupils were not sufficiently enhanced by the preparatory work. At times, teachers were not clear enough about the context and purpose of activities, for example, differences between written texts and spoken ones.
- Pupils know their curricular targets in English and the school has established a clear framework for reviewing progress within "focus" sessions. However, marking varies in the quality of feedback to pupils about their next steps and teachers' comments too rarely relate directly to these individual targets.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is good.

- Strengths of the taught curriculum in English include a good focus on developing speaking and listening which is having a positive impact on standards. The reading programme is effective and leads to above average standards and positive attitudes from pupils. Spelling and handwriting are taught systematically across the school.
- Information and Communication Technology enhances work in English through opportunities to use technology for research, for writing and re-drafting, and to support oral presentations.
- The enrichment curriculum makes a substantial contribution to work in English. This includes work by theatre groups in school, reading and drama clubs, and a range of other activities that support reading. In

addition, the numerous visits by pupils in other areas of the curriculum, such as history, provide very good contexts for work in literacy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory with some good features.

- The progress of individual pupils is tracked systematically and this enables the school to identify under-performance and to provide support where needed.
- There is a clear agenda for improvement in English with an action plan aimed at raising standards of writing, as well as recent developments in areas including spelling and the teaching of phonics. The action plan is well focused although it lacks clear success criteria.
- The subject leader is allocated some time over the year for English work. This has been well used, for example, to carry out joint lesson observations and to review planning across classes. Lesson observations give teachers feedback on their work although the current format used does not focus enough on the progress made by pupils in lessons.
- Standards have risen in the past year and the school had made good progress in closing the gender gap in English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving teaching through clearer identification of specific learning objectives within individual lessons
- raising standards in writing by providing more opportunities for all pupils to produce extended writing and improving the quality of feedback to pupils through teachers' marking.

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

Philip Jarrett, Her Majesty's Inspector
National Adviser for English