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Mrs S Fearnough
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fearnough

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 24 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; observation of four lessons; and brief visits to five other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Results at the end of Key Stage 2 tests have been higher than average for each of the last two years after a period of significantly below average results. Standards in the current Year 6 are above average, confirming a trend of sustained improvement.
- Historic contextual value-added data show girls making better progress than boys. The school's detailed monitoring of progress suggests the gap is closing. While current Year 6 girls have made better progress in reading, the boys have achieved more highly in writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

- In lessons, pupils work with very high levels of enthusiasm. They concentrate very well on improving their skills.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils' great enjoyment of English owes much to their teachers' highly interactive organisation of teaching and learning. Pupils' levels of involvement in lessons are high because of frequent chances for pair and group work, shared story-telling and role-play.
- The teachers' outstanding use of displays to help learning permeates classrooms and corridors. As one pupil said: 'If I am stuck for a good sentence opener, I just look at the opener wall.' Displays celebrate high quality work and exemplify the process that helped pupils complete the work, particularly the thorough re-editing of the writing.
- Teachers' good knowledge of the features of different sorts of texts, such as chronological writing, helps pupils understand clearly how to structure and compose their writing. Marking is good. The very best provides not only targets for improvement but examples of how to achieve them.
- In some lessons, the learning is not effectively secured. The original learning objective loses focus amid the busy activities that take place.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is evolving into one that seeks to put the development of literacy at its centre. As a result, planning pays explicit attention to techniques such as: the use of precise and powerful vocabulary; a range of sentence structures; and oral work that prepares pupils for writing. Access to good reading material forms an important part of the curriculum and gives the pupils opportunities to improve their ability to recognise the effective features of writing.
- There are good enrichment opportunities for pupils to enhance their writing and reading. These include a series of half-term initiatives under the Every Child a Writer programme; story-writing and reading competitions; and links to literacy sites on the school website. Pupils recalled a recent visit from an author with great enthusiasm.
- The Year 6 books revealed some opportunities for using techniques of argument in extended, independent writing on their sustainable world topic. However, scrutiny of books revealed that there are too few opportunities for extended writing in English and other subjects.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- You and the literacy coordinator provide a strong team. The leadership team's good use of external support has successfully led to the establishment of an interactive approach to teaching and learning and a more precise focus on how to help pupils produce effective writing. The team has accurately identified the need to assure more opportunities for extended writing and has planned external training to achieve that.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress is exceptional and provides detailed information about the progress of different groups of pupils and of individuals. The leadership team ensures data are used effectively to set appropriately challenging expectations and to identify where extra intervention and support are best placed.
- The English action plan accurately analyses where improvement is needed but does not make best use of data to evaluate its impact.

Provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

The school has sound systems for identifying gifted and talented pupils. It is starting to amend schemes of work to provide greater challenge, particularly for independent learning, but this has yet to have impact. The pupils enjoy activities such as their computer club and writing the school newspaper.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards further by:
 - increasing opportunities for extended independent writing in all subjects
 - ensuring teaching consistently clarifies links between the planned activities and learning objectives.

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

Chris Griffin
Additional Inspector