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Mr N Dixon
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dixon

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 22 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 two other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Standards in English are broadly average and in line with the results of the school's end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2009. Standards are considerably higher than the low results attained in the tests of 2007 and 2008. The quality of pupils' writing has improved significantly. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 is lower than average.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress from a low starting point. This is confirmed by the striking improvement in the contextual value-added data for 2009 and by the quality of the pupils' extended writing. There is little difference in

the progress of boys and girls in reading, but despite improvements, the standard of girls' writing is a little below that of the boys'.

- Progress in lessons is good. Pupils throughout the school work hard to put into practice the advice they receive.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils speak positively about their English lessons and their teachers' helpful advice. They especially like what one pupil called the 'soothing and calm' nature of the weekly lesson of extended writing.
- The improved standards reflect the teachers' high expectations and their very precise use of methods that help pupils become more confident and able writers. Year 2 pupils made very good progress in organising their written explanations about routines in Victorian households because the planning sheet they were given helped them sort out their ideas into different sections. Teachers' frequent use of their good knowledge about effective ways to build sentences and extend vocabulary helps pupils improve their writing.
- When progress in lessons was not as good it was the result of shortcomings in the class teachers' use of questions. They did not encourage enough reflective and independent thinking. Teachers plan work for different levels of ability in their classes but the work for the highest attainers does not consistently provide challenge.
- Marking is consistently good. It reinforces what the pupil does well and gives clear targets for improvement that are helpfully expressed.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is satisfactory.

- The school's priority of improving provision for writing has been extremely effective. Its impact is highly visible in the numerous displays of different types of well-organised extended writing on a range of topics. Many of these pieces are stimulated by enjoyable and motivating subjects, such as The Tudors, The Second World War and The Beatles, so drawing together different areas of the curriculum. The provision has boosted pupils' standards of writing and they rightly feel proud of their achievements.
- The school recognises that its approach to reading does not yet match the extent of its approach to writing. In the younger years, pupils are making a good start to acquiring a working understanding of letters and sounds. A relative lack of reading material, especially whole texts, constrains exploiting this good start as pupils move up the school.
- Pupils enjoy enrichment events such as educational visits and visits to the school made by authors and a Victorian butler. They would like more use

of information and communication technology in English. There are effective after-school sessions that boost pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The newly formed leadership team is leading the rapid improvement in outcomes. Expectations are higher and the school has embedded a consistent approach to the improvement of extended writing throughout the school. The team has a secure grasp of areas for improvement such as the need to expand reading resources. Its evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate
- The monitoring of data relating to progress is systematic and probing. The team has an accurate knowledge of the rates of progress of different groups of pupils and of where to provide intervention. The team also uses feedback from pupils to determine where improvement is needed, such as the content of pupils' writing.

Provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

The school acknowledges that this area has not been a key focus. It is attempting to provide greater challenge for gifted and talented pupils through more open-ended tasks. The pupils themselves enjoy what they see as the greater challenge provided by the weekly extended writing sessions.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards further, especially for the proportion of pupils who achieve Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing tasks that consistently challenge higher attaining pupils
 - ensuring provision for reading matches the provision for writing
 - establishing challenging open-ended questioning in all lessons.

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