

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



2 June 2010

Mrs J Cannie
Principal
Sawston Village College
New Road
Sawston
Cambridgeshire
CB22 3BP

Dear Mrs Cannie

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 24 and 25 May 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good and improving.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Students' attainment is above average overall and was well above average in 2009 when over 80% of students gained a GCSE grade C or above. The college's assessment information for students in the current Years 10 and 11 indicates that results may not quite reach the standard achieved in 2009 but are likely to be above average.
- In 2009, students made very good progress overall. Over the last three years, most students have made good progress but some groups, especially students of lower prior attainment and students from some minority ethnic groups, made satisfactory progress.
- In 2009, the gap between the performance of girls and boys was narrower than that nationally. However, the college's assessment information indicates that the gap was wider for Year 9 students and may grow again this year.

- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress.
- In the lessons observed, students settled to work promptly and collaborated well. They understood what was expected of them and enjoyed working in small groups. Most contributed orally but a minority needed encouragement from the teacher to develop or explain their answers more fully.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good and improving.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly with clear objectives. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to organise learning and to gain students' interest. Lessons are well-structured and conducted with good pace. In the best lessons, teachers use questions well to check students' understanding and get them to extend their thinking.
- Relationships in lessons are very good and students enjoy working in pairs and small groups. They listen well to each other.
- Although there is some matching of work to students' differing abilities, this is not always effective because the objectives set are usually the same for all, even where there is a wide range of attainment.
- Students often assess their own work or that of their peers and are becoming familiar with level or grade criteria. However, on occasions, these activities lack sufficient focus and purpose to be fully effective.
- Teachers' marking is thorough. They comment on what students achieve and set targets for improvement, although the process for students to follow up these targets varies too much.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- Schemes of work are well-planned and give teachers very good guidance on objectives, teaching resources and assessment.
- There is a good balance between reading, writing, speaking and listening and between different genres and text types, including poetry and non-fiction.
- A well-conceived and detailed additional literacy course caters well for selected Year 7 students. It has interesting links which embed and build on literacy skills in other subjects such as history. There is also a good range of additional support and intervention for students in Key Stage 4.
- Effective strategies encourage students' reading but students suggest that they have less opportunity to use drama approaches and computers in English lessons.

- Students have access to a sound range of enrichment activities. These include competitions, theatre trips and a unit on designing and marketing a children's book offered in the college activities week programme.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good and improving.

- The subject leader has a very clear vision for English and has put developments in place rapidly since his appointment. He has a precise set of priorities for action based on careful analysis of students' performance.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork and sharing of ideas between teachers. Expectations for teaching and assessment are clear and the subject leader has worked hard to improve consistency of approach. New policies are becoming established though their impact is still variable.
- The subject leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in English, based on a developing process of monitoring and evaluation, which has informed a detailed action plan.
- The ethos and practice of the English team are developing rapidly because of very effective leadership which uses the experience and expertise within the team.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further improving the consistency of teaching and assessment by:
 - matching objectives and tasks to students' differing abilities
 - ensuring that students have a clear and specific focus when assessing their own work and that of their peers
- developing the curriculum to include greater use of drama approaches and the application of computer technology and modern communications.

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 under the URN for your college. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector