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Mr D Johnstone  
Gallions Mount Primary School  
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Dear Mr Johnstone

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 June 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 without their consent.

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 good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with average. Standards of writing have improved well in the past two years and the overall upward trend in English is better than the national picture.
- Contextual value-added and other performance data show that progress in English in recent years has been good. Boys make as much progress as girls. Most groups of pupils achieve equally well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some individual pupils make especially good progress, including some pupils who speak a language other than English at home. However, the data suggest that more able pupils make slightly less progress than other pupils in the school.
- Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 1. However, this still represents good progress given very low standards in language and communication on entry to the school.

- Progress in lessons observed was good. Pupils are keen to learn. They try hard and concentrate well although many lack the skills of independent learning.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Relationships with pupils are good and teachers engage pupils well through a range of lively activities including drama and hot-seating. Lessons are planned thoroughly and good use is made of teaching assistants to support identified groups of pupils. Teachers are enthusiastic and make effective use of good-quality literary texts.
- In the lessons observed, there was a tendency for teachers to try to cover too much and the learning objectives were not always clear enough in relation to outcomes in writing. As a result, progress in writing was limited. Some of the weaker writers needed more support while the more confident writers were not always challenged sufficiently.
- Pupils enjoy English lessons. They appreciate the help and advice provided by teachers. They like the variety in lessons and respond particularly well to drama and the purposeful cross-curricular work. Some of the gifted and talented pupils felt that teachers sometimes gave them too little help and support during lessons.
- Assessment is good. Pupils know their targets and are clear about the criteria for assessment. Marking is consistently thorough. The most effective marking identifies both strengths and areas for development. However, there is too little correction of pupils' mistakes, especially in spelling.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum engages pupils and enables them to make good progress. Well-chosen activities ensure that boys are fully involved in lessons.
- A distinctive feature of the curriculum is the well-developed integration of English with other subjects. This especially supports pupils' writing since it gives them real purposes and contexts. Pupils throughout the school are given good opportunities for extended writing. Good provision means that pupils' attitudes towards writing are more positive than is sometimes the case. However, there is too little systematic teaching of spelling.
- Reading is well developed through the new phonics programme, guided and individual reading, and the study of good-quality whole texts. Pupils write about their reading in journals, although few opportunities exist to share books and discuss their reading or different authors.
- Some high-quality enrichment activities support English well. In recent times, this has included the visit of a National Theatre group, a story

teller's residency in school, and trips that provide good contexts for literacy work.

- The school has plans to improve its resources for information and communication technology. At present, pupils have opportunities to use computers for word processing and research but there are gaps in studying and creating media texts.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Good subject leadership ensures that standards of writing have improved in recent years. The coordinator has good subject knowledge, provides effective leadership and supports other teachers well.
- The school's self-evaluation in English is accurate. Senior staff have identified clearly the most important areas for development and plan to further improve teaching through an emphasis on assessment for learning. The current subject plans contain gaps, for instance, in improving provision for more able pupils and providing more specific success criteria against which to judge progress.
- Teaching and learning are evaluated well through lesson observations and some very thorough work scrutinies. The detailed analysis of progress in reading and writing tests provides a good insight into strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work. Pupils' progress is monitored systematically.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the teaching of writing by:
  - the use of effective learning objectives that identify clearly the improvements in pupils' writing planned for the lesson
  - providing more effective support for pupils of varying ability within writing lessons
  - placing greater emphasis on teaching spelling and on correcting spelling mistakes in pupils' writing.

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 school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett  
Her Majesty's Inspector