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Mr R Marshall
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Dear Mr Marshall

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 1 July 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 three lessons.

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

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Attainment in English has been slightly above average over the past three years. The gap between pupils' performance in reading and writing is above average at both Level 4+ and Level 5.
- Progress, as measured by contextual value-added measures, has been satisfactory in recent years. Boys have made better progress across Key Stage 2 than girls. There are no other substantial differences in the progress of other groups, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Standards were above average in the lessons observed and progress was good. This supports the school's internal monitoring data which suggest that the current Year 6 pupils will achieve more highly than those in 2009.

- Pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well. Many are quite confident and express their ideas clearly and well. They collaborate effectively when working in groups and provide good mutual support.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory.

- Past performance has been affected by some staffing instability. Teaching observed during the inspection was good. Relationships were secure and teachers managed the learning well. Lessons were lively, with a good range of activities and positive pupil engagement.
- Strengths of the lessons observed included the following: the Year 6 lesson involved some very good modelling of writing that helped pupils to make good progress; the Year 4 lesson showed good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support literacy; the lesson in the Early Years Foundation Stage included well-planned use of a substantial number of adults to support pupils' oral skills and phonic development.
- The teaching of writing has improved as a result of recent changes. However, pupils need help to develop their ability to redraft and re-write work.
- Despite recent developments in assessment, pupils remain uncertain about how to improve their work in English. The school has consistent approaches on marking and the use of curricular targets in writing. However, feedback on work is not always clear enough about identifying the next steps in pupils' learning.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- There are some innovative elements in the English curriculum. Particularly good use is made of ICT to support literary development. In addition to the use of word processing and internet research, teachers use hand-held computers and media technology to engage pupils and develop their work.
- An effective reading curriculum helps pupils to make good progress with reading. This includes time for individual reading, group reading and the use of class novels. The school acknowledges the need to improve the use and impact of the library.
- New approaches to writing include effective and regular opportunities for pupils to complete extended writing. Developing cross-curricular links mean that pupils are also able to develop writing in subject contexts outside English.
- A good range of enrichment activities supports English work well. This includes trips and visits, drama productions, links with the local community, and a drama club for younger pupils. The school also makes good use of competitions to motivate pupils as well as exploiting opportunities for pupils to publish their work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Senior leaders have a very clear idea of current weaknesses in writing and have drawn up an effective list of actions to deal with this. Early evidence suggests that this has already had a positive impact on standards of writing in Year 6.
- The subject leader has been effective in ensuring whole-staff consistency in areas such as assessment and marking. Good monitoring of the progress of recent initiatives has resulted in changes to short-term planning and the Big Write initiative. Distinctive aspects of English included a well-focused use of media technology.
- The school's monitoring of pupils' progress has improved and this enables staff to identify any underperformance. Well-planned intervention has helped pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to improve in areas of weakness.
- Senior leaders evaluate the impact of teaching through work sampling and lesson observations, generally within the performance management process. However, this does not always provide detailed enough feedback on a regular basis about strengths and weaknesses at a subject level.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve Levels 4 and 5 in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - improving feedback to pupils about how to extend and develop their writing
 - providing more systematic opportunities for pupils to redraft their work, where appropriate.

I hope that 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