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Miss C Scott  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Scott

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 14 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 seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- A three-year upward trend in standards and rates of progress has been sustained. Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with language and communication levels well below those expected for their age. In Key Stage 1, they slowly and steadily build up basic skills. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is broadly in line with national averages, considerably exceeding predictions based on attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. This represents good progress. Pupils have stronger skills in reading than in writing.
- The school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially difficulties with speech and language. They make better progress than similar pupils nationally, benefiting from intensive and specialist support.

- Pupils are not generally independent learners but they have a positive attitude to English and take pride in meeting their personal targets. However, the levels of challenge are less consistently ambitious for more able pupils than for those who find English difficult.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Among the strengths observed were confident subject knowledge, effective questioning skills, sensitivity to pupils' individual needs and infectious enthusiasm. Teachers and support staff skilfully blend conventional teaching approaches with strategies to support pupils with speech and communication difficulties. Pupils' understanding is checked and reinforced through whole-class question and answer sessions, peer- and self-review and individual discussions. The marking of work is clear and constructive.
- Lesson planning is well-structured, effectively caters for pupils' differing abilities and learning styles and is continually reviewed and amended to reflect pupils' progress
- While the lessons observed were generally well paced, the time provided for activities did not always allow pupils to do enough to feel a sense of achievement. Occasionally, opportunities for learning were missed when pupils were working in pairs or in small groups without sufficient support from an adult. When presented with too much material to deal with unaided or when tasks were so open-ended that there was little sense of urgency, pupils lost focus.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum is highly inclusive, very effectively extending the influence on teaching and learning of outstanding provision in the Speech and Language Centre. Many pupils enjoy the 'Philosophy for Children' units, which they recognise are refining their thinking and debating skills.
- A range of reading schemes and a major investment in attractive fiction and non-fiction texts have raised reading levels and been increasingly successful in motivating boys. Progress in reading is having a positive impact on literacy. Firm direction on how to plan and develop written work bolsters pupils' confidence and consolidates skills but restricts scope for independent and creative writing.
- Effective use is made of technology to extend pupils' communication skills. Off-site access to the school's virtual learning environment encourages independent work on termly 'home learning' assignments. Valuable opportunities for film-making come through links with a local high school.
- Events such as Book Week, school plays and visits from writers and storytellers successfully complement the main curriculum and are much

enjoyed. The most able pupils participate in activities organised locally, such as animation workshops and creative writing.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a very thorough grounding in phonics is complemented by well-managed opportunities for children to extend their speaking and listening skills and to experiment with the letters and sounds recently learnt.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Strong leadership from senior teachers has driven recent improvements and embedded a culture of high expectation and openness to change.
- An extensive programme of professional development, both for teachers and teaching assistants, has included work on reading, literacy, phonics, assessment, planning and the skills needed to support pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. The curriculum is constantly reviewed and is evolving strongly. Teaching and learning are systematically monitored and underachievement is tackled promptly. Levels of attainment are rising.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening achievement, especially in Key Stage 1, by:
  - taking further steps to close the gap between reading and writing, including the development of extended and creative writing
  - ensuring that all pupils are actively and constructively engaged when working in pairs or small groups
  - consistently presenting more able pupils with appropriate challenge.

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

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector