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Mr D Ashley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ashley

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 22 September 2011 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 good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English has risen in recent years and is now broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils who reach the higher Level 5 is below average. The school has worked hard to improve writing although the gap between reading and writing remains significant.
- Children's literacy and communication skills are below national expectations when they arrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' progress throughout the school is good. There are no significant differences between the achievement of groups in the school although, against the national trend, boys seem to make more progress than girls.
- Pupils enjoy English lessons, work hard, and are keen to contribute ideas. They work well together in small groups and pairs. Some pupils lack confidence in speaking and in developing their ideas.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils spoke very positively about teaching in English, especially the older pupils. They like the variety in lessons and appreciate the helpful support from teachers to improve their work.
- Strengths in lessons observed included: strong relationships; good planning between teachers and classroom assistants; considered efforts to provide effective differentiation; and the choice of topics and approaches that engaged their interest. A rich learning environment in classrooms supports pupils' work well. Writing was modelled particularly well in some classes although there were times when pupils might have been encouraged to work more independently.
- At times, teachers missed opportunities to check or consolidate pupils' learning before moving on to the next task and plans were sometimes more focused on the activities than on the outcomes for learners in the lesson.
- Assessment is good. Pupils understand their targets and what they need to do to improve. The best marking is detailed and helpful in identifying pupils' next steps. There is a broad consistency of approach and teachers try to ensure that pupils follow up the comments in their marking.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- There are some distinctive and original elements to the English curriculum. The reading curriculum is especially strong. Good support is provided for the younger children in the school and parents are fully involved in developing reading. The emphasis in the school is on encouraging a love of reading alongside developing the appropriate skills. There is a very good variety of books in all classes to support reading and pupils enjoy the regular shared 'core texts'.
- Attitudes to writing have improved as a result of recent changes. Links with the school's cross-curricular themes ensure that pupils have lots to write about and high status is given to writing through publishing pupils' work and events like the Writing Festival. Thoughtful policies have been introduced to improve writing. Many pupils produce especially effective creative and descriptive writing. However, the work sample suggested that some pupils need a better balance of creative and factual styles of writing, with more regular opportunities to write at length.
- In the best teaching, good use is made of drama and role play to support the pupils' learning. The school has recently revised its approach to handwriting and this is currently receiving much more attention. Similar thought is now being given to improving spelling.
- The English curriculum is enriched through the wide range of visits and trips linked to whole-school themes. However, some pupils have not yet

had experience of visiting the theatre, or working with drama groups or writers.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good with outstanding features.

- English is given high priority in the school's plans. Strengths and weaknesses have been clearly identified and the school knows what it needs to do to improve attainment further.
- Subject leadership is very effective. The school has improved areas of weakness including the teaching of writing. The subject leader has been effective in supporting and training staff, and this has produced a good level of consistency of practice. She models effective teaching in English well. She is well supported by senior staff who have identified a clear vision and direction for the school.
- Pupils' work is monitored systematically and well. Effective interventions have been introduced to support underachieving pupils. Monitoring and evaluation are also systematic and good attention is given in the school development plan to potential further improvements in teaching.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving achievement in writing, including for more able pupils, by:
 - increasing pupils' opportunities to write independently
 - reviewing the balance of creative, imaginative writing with more factual non-fiction types of writing
 - ensuring that all pupils have regular opportunities to produce extended writing.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett
Her Majesty's Inspector