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Mr C Flanagan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Flanagan

Ofsted 2013–14 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 5 June 2013 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English is good.

- Pupils achieve well in English. They make good progress in all Key Stages. Achievement is excellent in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening is so effectively addressed, particularly through carefully structured and purposeful play.
- Standards have improved from a low base in 2010 and now exceed the national average in English overall although there is still a small gap in writing, which is narrowing rapidly. All pupils make good progress from their starting points in Key Stages 1 and 2, including those eligible for free school meals, who in 2012 made better progress than their peers within the school and nationally.
- Pupils enjoy English lessons. They behave well and manifestly enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively together. They willingly share ideas

and welcome the chance to evaluate each other's work. They progress well because activities in lessons are lively and interesting and meet their individual needs well.

Teaching in English is good.

- The atmosphere in lessons is purposeful and engaging. Teachers draw on a wide range of resources to plan interesting and stimulating tasks that capture pupils' imaginations and promote good learning. Relationships are positive, additional adults are deployed appropriately and classrooms are well organised. Eye-catching and helpful displays feature in all classrooms, designed to remind pupils of the key tools to help them develop and improve their writing.
- Marking and feedback to pupils are mainly helpful, providing guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. In the best examples, pupils respond to the marking comments and show the improvement they have made. However, pupils' presentation of work is at times too untidy.
- Teachers use a range of techniques, such as questioning, to support pupils' learning well by probing their understanding and extending their thinking. In the most effective lessons, teachers routinely provide good opportunities for pupils to share their best work with one another, enabling all pupils to move forward in their learning effectively.
- Leaders have introduced an effective scheme, 'Stepping stones to great writing,' to improve pupils' writing. 'Stepping stones' are displayed in every classroom and are well-known to all pupils. All pupils with whom I spoke felt that the scheme and the way that teachers use it have greatly helped them with their writing.

The curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum has been the subject of extensive review. It is now broad and covers a good range of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. Topics and texts studied ensure that the interests of boys and girls are well reflected. Pupils are enthusiastic about the ways in which 'Stepping stones' help them to remember to use a wide range of punctuation, syntax and writing techniques correctly in their writing.
- A good range of additional activities enhances pupils' experiences. Reading is promoted well and pupils regularly read at home. Competitions provide good incentives to encourage pupils to both read and write. For example, during the recent half-term, pupils were asked to think and write about a 'strange thing that happened to them'. The best pieces of writing were already on display in the headteacher's office.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to talk to visiting authors and poets. Those with whom I spoke were keenly anticipating the forthcoming visit to Devon to the farm of the author, Michael Morpurgo.
- The library is well-resourced and extensively used. Teachers encourage pupils to review the books they read and become involved in events such as 'World Book Week'.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- You and your lead manager for English and other senior leaders work very effectively together. The manager has a clear vision for the development of the subject and regularly leads whole–staff training to underpin improvement strategies, including the development of writing.
- You and your leaders routinely monitor pupils' achievement across the four skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing, providing additional support where needed if pupils lag behind. Consequently, standards achieved and the rate at which pupils progress from their starting points are now much better than in the past and rapidly improving. Your self-evaluation is accurate and realistic.
- Staff work well together and undertake well-directed training to develop their skills. There is a clear commitment and a common purpose to achieve further improvement. Through a range of activities to check on the quality of teaching, high expectations are understood by all. As a result, there is a consistency of approach to supporting pupils effectively and moving them forward in their learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- building on the success of 'Stepping stones' for great writing, so that standards in writing match those achieved in reading
- ensuring teachers routinely factor sufficient time into their lesson plans for pupils to work independently
- improving pupils' presentation of their work.

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

Lesley Farmer
Her Majesty's Inspector