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Mrs C McDonald
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McDonald

Ofsted 2012–13 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 five lessons. One observation was carried out jointly with you.

The overall effectiveness of English requires improvement

Achievement in English requires improvement.

- Pupils' achievement in reading and writing is improving over time. In 2012 pupils made good progress from their starting points so standards broadly matched the national average. Nonetheless, this positive picture is not reflected in all classes. Although many more pupils are making expected progress, not enough are making greater gains in their learning. As a result attainment in reading and writing remains variable across the school. Achievement gaps between different groups are narrowing convincingly.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about English lessons. They work hard and are keen to succeed. Pupils work well together in group activities and they are willing to share their ideas and listen to each other. Pupils' attitudes to reading have improved and they enjoy reading for purpose and for pleasure in school and at home. They are equally keen to write. Some

pupils are able to write with flair and imagination for sustained periods of time. They use vocabulary and punctuation well to add depth to their writing and grasp the reader's interest. Not all pupils achieve as well because their progress is hampered by an overuse of worksheets. This limits pupils' ability to think for themselves and to write at length. Too many pupils have weak spelling and handwriting skills.

Teaching in English requires improvement.

- All teachers plan interesting lessons which capture pupils' interest and make learning relevant. Teachers are striving to help pupils become independent learners by providing opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Teaching Assistants and classroom volunteers make a positive difference to pupils' learning.
- Some English teaching is good. This is because teachers have strong subject knowledge and high expectations of all pupils. However, not all teaching matches the best. In less effective lessons, time is not used wisely and some activities, particularly those designed for the most able pupils, lack challenge.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' English work is thorough and provides helpful guidance so pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, pupils are not always given time to respond to these useful comments.
- Pupils are full of praise for the teaching they receive. They recognise English teaching has improved. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers try hard to engage with us and make learning exciting.' Pupils appreciate the different opportunities they have to talk and plan their work before setting pen to paper.

The curriculum in English requires improvement

- The English curriculum successfully helps pupils gain key skills and knowledge as they move from class to class. The teaching of reading and narrative writing is systematically planned so teachers know exactly what they need to teach to help pupils reach the levels expected for their age. The school is in the early stages of planning a whole-school approach for non-fiction writing to ensure all pupils have enough opportunity to deepen their knowledge and skills. The use of information communication technology (ICT) and multi-media to broaden pupils' experiences is underdeveloped.
- The building blocks to help pupils use their English skills in other subjects are firmly in place. This means teachers are making links between different areas of the curriculum to make learning more purposeful.
- Links with external partners are being exploited more effectively to enrich the English curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to attend a Drama Club, produce their own plays, work with visiting authors and visit the library are all helping to broaden pupils' experiences and harness their enthusiasm for reading and writing.

Leadership and management of English is good

- Although relatively new to post, the subject leader, with the full support of senior leaders, has driven improvements in English. Teaching is improving and pupils are making greater gains in their learning. The impact of his work is evident in the successful whole-school approach to reading which has led to improvements in pupils' attitudes and achievement.
- Leaders and managers know what they need to do to bring about further success and have appropriate plans in place. They have a detailed understanding of current strengths and weaknesses because the checks on teaching are frequent and thorough. Teachers' benefit from clear feedback and good subject guidance.
- Information on pupils' progress is used well to ensure any pupils who are falling behind receive extra help. As a result achievement gaps are closing and more pupils are making expected progress in reading and writing.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising pupils' achievement in English further by:
 - tackling pupils' weaknesses in spelling and handwriting
 - ensuring pupils are given time to act on the helpful guidance teachers provide in their marking
 - ensuring activities challenge all pupils, including the most able
- improving the English curriculum by:
 - ensuring the teaching of non-fiction writing is systematically planned across the school so all pupils have sufficient opportunity to deepen their skills and knowledge
 - providing greater opportunities for pupils to use ICT and multi-media in their everyday English lessons.

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

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector