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Mrs J Alison
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Alison

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 September to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit included a focus on our current survey theme of creativity 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in English is good. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6.

- In 2008, by the end of Year 2, pupils reached standards that were above average in reading. The sharp upward trend in pupils' performance in writing continued, with standards just above average.
- By the end of Year 6, in 2008, pupils reached standards that were above average in English. Both reading and writing improved substantially on 2007.
- Pupils join the school with broadly average capability and make good progress in English.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points as a result of carefully targeted additional support.

- Over the last two years, boys and girls have performed at similar levels by the end of Year 2. This was also the case by the end of Year 6 in 2008.
- Strategies used by the school to improve all areas of English skills have been effective and are reflected in the improving trend in results.
- Pupils are encouraged to be active in their learning and given good opportunities to talk with each other. They generally show confidence and enjoy English.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, setting clear objectives and pitching work well to the differing needs of pupils.
- Lessons start purposefully, continue with good pace and offer a wide variety of activities.
- Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to discuss ideas and problems with each other and ensure that their responses are noted.
- Teachers' marking is detailed, refers to key objectives and gives clear advice to pupils on what they need to improve. Pupils have a good understanding of their targets. However, there is less evidence of them assessing their own work or that of their peers.
- Increasingly, teachers involve the pupils in their learning by asking them to discuss what they want to find out and need to know at the beginning of units of work.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- The school has taken effective action to improve literacy skills by developing whole school approaches such as introducing regular, high profile writing sessions linked to careful preparation and a strong, consistent focus on key aspects including punctuation and vocabulary.
- Teachers have planned the curriculum to integrate learning from different subjects into broader units of work such as 'Childhood in Victorian Britain' or 'Learning about London'. Opportunities for pupils to write for real purposes in practical contexts have been effectively planned into these units and into other subjects.
- Teachers increasingly use time more flexibly to ensure that pupils can continue learning where appropriate rather than have to leave an activity and pick it up another day.
- There is a varied programme of intervention for pupils with specific needs, including higher attaining pupils, through specific group work and effective support in class.

- Teachers use interactive white boards well to engage pupils' interest and there are good examples of computers used for research or for practice of key skills.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good.

- You and the subject leader identify key areas for development accurately and put into place effective plans for improvement, supported by good training for all staff.
- There is a very clear vision for English within a broader concept of the curriculum, building on the natural links between subjects. However, this is strongly balanced by a commitment to teaching key literacy skills discretely.
- Pupils' progress is monitored closely and the information is used well to plan interventions and to direct curriculum planning.
- You and the subject leader have a good awareness of the quality of provision in English through regular review of teachers' planning, teaching and marking, and of pupils' work.
- Although the practice in the school is generally reflective, formal evaluation of the impact of recent changes to the curriculum has yet to be undertaken.

Creativity in English

- The school focuses on developing pupils' independence and confidence as learners.
- There is an increasing relationship between subjects in broad units of work which provides opportunities for pupils to practise writing in more realistic contexts.
- Visiting authors, theatre groups, trips and activities have been used to make learning more enjoyable and immediate for pupils.
- Increasingly, teachers use more creative activities in lessons and give pupils opportunities to direct their learning, as observed in a formal debate run by Year 5 and 6 pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing pupils with more frequent opportunities to discuss and assess their own work and that of their peers
- ensuring that recent curriculum changes are thoroughly evaluated.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector