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Ms M Davies
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Dear Ms Davies

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 8 February 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Standards in English are in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in writing have improved in recent years and the gap between reading and writing is less than the national trend. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 declined last year.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. This is confirmed both by the contextual value-added data, which show above average progress in English over the past three years, and evidence from books and lessons during the inspection. The achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar. Indian pupils achieve especially well. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made satisfactory progress over this period.

- Nearly all pupils speak English as an additional language and, on entry to the school, many are in the early stages of learning English. The achievement of many of these pupils is especially good.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and behave extremely well as a result.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Pupils speak very highly of their lessons in English. They say that teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and interactive. They enjoy opportunities to work together in groups and develop their speaking skills.
- In lessons observed, pupils' progress was always satisfactory and often good. In the most effective lessons, pupils were motivated by lively and engaging tasks. For example, in Year 6, pupils were investigating a 'crime scene' and interviewing witnesses while Year 4 pupils watched a short film made by their teacher and used it to construct arguments that could be applied in a real-life context. Relationships were good in all lessons. The pace of learning was good and activities were varied with helpful emphasis on speaking and listening.
- Where progress in lessons was not as good, this sometimes reflected learning objectives that were too vague or did not provide sufficient direction to the lesson. Teachers' plans were not always clear enough in identifying appropriate levels of challenge for the more able pupils.
- The best marking provides a good balance of personal response with targets for improvement. Pupils are given good opportunities for writing across the curriculum although there is too little extended writing in some books. Pupils know their individual targets in English. However, marking too rarely provides direct feedback on progress against these targets.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is good.

- The school has a comprehensive approach to reading. Resources have been improved and pupils now have a good choice of up-to-date, modern texts. Pupils enjoy reading. There is a good focus on group reading as well as time for independent reading, supported by reading records and journals. Good links have been established with the local, public library.
- Links between English and other areas of the curriculum have been strengthened and pupils speak well of the opportunities for improving literacy that are provided by visits out of school. Trips are a significant feature of the curriculum and these help to broaden pupils' experiences as well as providing purposeful contexts for writing and speaking.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support research and word processing although too little moving-image work currently takes place in English.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The subject is well led by a coordinator supported by a team from across the different year groups. Year leaders share responsibility for monitoring and evaluation. This approach has the potential to provide strong and cohesive subject leadership and regular exchange of good practice.
- The school's self-evaluation in English is accurate and identifies areas of strength as well as development points. The subject action plan is extremely thorough and updated on a termly basis. However, it currently lacks clear success criteria linked to outcomes for pupils.
- The progress of pupils is monitored systematically and reviewed through regular meetings with all teachers. This enables the school to identify underachievement and intervene appropriately. Teaching and learning are monitored through lesson observations and scrutinies of plans and pupils' work. Joint lesson observations provide good opportunities to standardise judgements although the form currently used focuses too little on progress by pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards further, especially the proportion of pupils who achieve level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, by:
 - improving the clarity of learning objectives and the effectiveness of plans in consistently challenging the most able pupils
 - ensuring that all pupils are given sufficient opportunities to produce extended writing.

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. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett
Her Majesty's Inspector