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Ms J Hubbard
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Dear Ms Hubbard

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 December 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 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 four part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory.

- Children join the school with knowledge, understanding and skills which are generally above national expectations. By the end of Year 2, they reach standards which are above average. In 2010, provisional results indicate that writing was stronger than reading but this is not usually the case. Boys performed particularly well.
- Over time, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 is above average. Provisional results for 2010 indicate that nearly 90% achieved Level 4. The proportion achieving Level 5 was above average in reading but below average in writing. The school has identified improving writing as a major priority.

- Pupils make broadly satisfactory progress from the end of Year 2 to Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities often make better progress than their peers.
- In lessons observed, pupils made at least satisfactory and often good progress. They settled to work promptly and enjoyed working in pairs or small groups. They shared their work willingly with the class and readily answered teachers' questions. In writing, their confidence and understanding are more varied, with some pupils, often boys, slow to develop ideas or struggling to apply key techniques.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory with good features.

- Teachers plan lessons with clear objectives and often use criteria for success to set expectations for pupils. They match work well to the differing needs and abilities of pupils and use teaching assistants effectively to support learning, for example in leading small groups.
- Teachers use a good range of approaches to engage pupils' interest, including drama techniques and the use of film or visual images. They mostly set high expectations and maintain good pace in lessons.
- The quality of teachers' use of questions varies and, on occasions, pupils were not sufficiently well prepared to answer challenging queries. Teachers did not always involve pupils sufficiently in reviewing what they had learnt, sharing their work but not drawing out the key learning points. Pupils' books show that they do assess their own writing using appropriate criteria.
- Teachers' marking and assessing of pupils' work varies in quality. There is some very clear marking with specific targets for improvement but sometimes teachers' comments are too general.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum covers a broad range of texts and genres with good access to poetry, drama and non-fiction. Pupils report that they use computers regularly, including sharing work on the 'learning platform'. They increasingly analyse film and media texts.
- Pupils enjoy work in English, in particular opportunities to be creative and to express their ideas. For example, they enjoyed writing their own 'Just So' story and 'family' poems. Increasingly, they use writing skills in other subjects such as diaries from a Victorian child's view in history.
- The promotion of reading is good and parents are involved successfully in supporting their children. The teaching of phonics is skilful and precise, providing children with good skills to develop their reading and spelling.
- Pupils benefit from a sound range of enrichment activities such as theatre trips and sharing their work in assemblies.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory.

- There is a clear policy for English which has been reviewed recently. The school has particular strengths, for example in promoting reading. Rigorous review of recent results has been effective in developing a clear action plan to improve pupils' writing. However, the strategies arising from this, such as the fortnightly common writing activity, are still at an early stage.
- Teachers share a commitment to improvement and are working hard to implement new approaches. They succeed in making the curriculum interesting for pupils.
- Common systems are in place for assessing pupils' reading and spelling skills. The system for assessing their writing has changed recently and it is providing good opportunities for teachers to moderate work and to review progress across the school.
- The school is in the process of adopting a new system for checking pupils' progress. The subject leader has not had regular opportunities to monitor the quality of provision but this is planned for the future.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving writing across the school by:
 - further developing the opportunities for pupils to practise their skills through topic work or other subjects
 - ensuring that pupils, especially boys, develop strategies to help them extend their ideas and understand how to use key techniques
- developing more consistent approaches to assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
 - give clear guidance to pupils on exactly how to improve their work, linked to their targets
 - implement a common system for monitoring pupils' progress.

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

As I 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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector