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Miss J Langley
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Dear Miss Langley

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 17 February 2011 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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below age-related expectations in communication, language and literacy. On entry to Key Stage 1, their skills are broadly average and by the end of Key Stage 1 standards are a little above average. Progress accelerates at Key Stage 2 and pupils gain significantly higher than predicted results. In Year 6, results are above average in English, and well above average in writing. This represents outstanding progress.
- Pupils develop excellent knowledge and understanding of grammar. This provides a highly effective tool for them to improve their understanding of texts and to extend their written language. They greatly enjoy the wide range of creative activities in English. These activities successfully inspire and enrich their talk, reading and writing.

- Pupils in catch-up programmes make excellent progress in developing their basic skills in reading and writing and in overcoming underachievement. These programmes are supported by effective engagement with parents. Gifted and talented pupils have excellent opportunities to work independently and extend their skills. This contributes to the high proportion of pupils that gain Level 5 in Year 6.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- Teachers' planning is excellent. Well-expressed curricular targets consistently direct the teaching and learning. Lessons are well linked and over time they methodically develop a wide range of reading and writing skills. In lessons, teachers' expert use of their knowledge of language structures and devices gives pupils an excellent understanding of English. Some lessons observed were outstanding and others good.
- The use of assessment is excellent. Success criteria are used in imaginative and practical ways to support and challenge pupils to extend their vocabulary and use of sentence structures. Work is carefully matched to pupils' levels of ability. The quality of marking is high with frequent and specific praise and well-defined targets for language development.
- Teachers make excellent use of a wide range of drama techniques to create experiences and feelings that improve pupils' writing. High-quality learning resources and software provide strong guidance and motivation in lessons. The extensive use of computers and cameras gives pupils a high level of choice and creativity in expressing themselves.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Curriculum planning provides strong direction for teaching and learning. A wide range of needs is very well catered for. Younger pupils with reading difficulties make rapid progress in additional reading sessions. Underachieving pupils overcome obstacles as a result of one-to-one sessions with a teacher. Systematic planning for the gifted and talented leads to outstanding progress by higher ability pupils.
- Drama plays a distinctive role in developing the speaking and listening skills, and the high standards in writing. The use of drama groups, writers and poets considerably enriches pupils' experience and has improved the range of strategies used by teachers. For example, pupils' response is heightened when teachers play the role of characters in stories.
- Many pupils and parents make regular use of the school's interesting and frequently updated virtual learning environment. This successfully promotes talk and writing about work in English on discussion boards. The enhanced access to educational websites at home successfully promotes and guides independent learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- Senior leaders provide strong direction and a clear vision for the development of English. English subject leaders are energetic and passionate and lead by example. Their philosophy of teaching and learning blends knowledge about the structure and use of language with creative activities. This has resulted in high achievement.
- Curricular targets for each year group provide a robust framework for developing skills in English each term. Individual curricular targets provide pupils with specific guidance and clear benchmarks for measuring progress. Leaders are rigorous in their monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress and they act promptly to tackle weaknesses. A recent self-review of English was thorough and led to prompt action. The innovative development of information and communication technology has significantly enhanced the range of ways in which pupils engage in language activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- disseminating best practice to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching.

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

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector