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Mr D Steele
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Steele

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 March 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is satisfactory.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is satisfactory overall with outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- The Reception class is building a strong foundation for future learning. Children show extremely well developed speaking and listening skills. They work productively together, sharing ideas and constructing interesting solutions to problems, which they present confidently for evaluation by the teacher and other children.
- Attainment in reading in Key Stage 1 has been uneven. However, in 2010 it was significantly above average by the end of Year 2, reflecting the impact of recent strategies. Attainment in writing has been below average but in 2010 improved to be broadly in line.
- Pupils' attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 has been broadly in line with national averages for the past three years. The proportion of pupils making at least two levels of progress has been smaller than the

national average, although there was a marked increase in 2010. Current in-school assessment indicates that there will be further improvement in 2011.

- Pupils are keen to meet expectations. They tackle tasks willingly, especially when working in groups or pairs. They are generally less confident and productive when working independently, especially when putting their thoughts into writing. The most able are not always challenged to move beyond their first responses towards a more analytical, inventive and imaginative approach.
- Less able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their contemporaries, benefiting from initiatives such as the 'Toe by Toe' reading and spelling programme. There is little difference in achievement between boys and girls except in Year 5 where girls currently have pulled ahead, both in reading and writing.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory overall and outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- All teaching observed was at least satisfactory with good elements in each Key Stage. In the Reception class, the teacher displayed outstanding skills in capturing children's interest and encouraging them to work collaboratively through a sequence of imaginings and practical problem-solving.
- Upward trends in progress and attainment monitored by the school indicate that teaching is driving improvement. Among its strengths are: a productive rapport with pupils; well-structured planning that builds on pupils' current knowledge and skills; brisk pace; effective deployment of teaching assistants; generally effective questioning skills; and confident use of appropriate technology.
- On occasion, learning opportunities are missed when the possibilities of an activity are not fully explored, and expectations for more able pupils are not consistently high.
- There are examples of marking that both encourages and guides but often the focus is on spelling, punctuation and sentence structure with relatively little attention to the quality of pupils' ideas and response to questions.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good with some outstanding features, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- The curriculum is organised on a two-year cycle to ensure steady progression and to develop pupils' literacy and communication skills across subjects. The emphasis given to reading and to discussion as the prelude to writing is having a perceptible impact, as improved reading levels demonstrate. A scheme to encourage reading at home is in place, supported by reading workshops for parents.

- Topics and texts are well selected, introducing pupils to novels, drama, poetry and a range of non-fiction writing. Story-telling plays an important part in engaging pupils' interest and developing their appreciation of structure and style.
- The strengthening of phonics teaching, not only in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 but also in Years 3 and 4, has underpinned improvements in reading.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- With strong support from you, the subject leader has established a clear vision for English and, as a first step, invested substantially in resources to raise reading levels. She has drawn on her participation in a boys' writing project to develop 'talk for writing' strategies in all years.
- There is evidence that these initiatives are now having a positive impact on teachers' skills and pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that more able pupils are fully challenged
- extending strategies to improve the range and accuracy of pupils' writing.

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

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector