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Mr S Maughan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Maughan

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 16 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 documentation and pupils' work; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is slightly above average. However, attainment is rising rapidly across the school. The standards of reading, writing and speaking and listening among younger classes are above average because better provision is accelerating the pupils' progress.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with language skills which are broadly typical for their age. They achieve very well in their Reception Year and make good progress by the end of Key Stage 1, notably in writing. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has improved for three years in a row.
- The quality of learning observed was generally good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils acquire a firm foundation of knowledge about sounds and letters and make rapid progress in speaking, reading and writing.

They participate enthusiastically in lively lessons and show increasing independence in resolving problems for themselves.

- Pupils love their mostly stimulating lessons and are proud of their work. They respond very well to the enthusiasm of their teachers. They see the point of being good readers, speakers and writers, because they practise their language skills as part of interesting topics and realistic enterprises. A growing proportion of pupils sees reading and writing as a pleasure.
- Increasingly precise assessment by teachers indicates that the great majority of pupils are on track to reach their challenging targets. Any indications of slower progress are rapidly detected and effectively addressed through well-focused interventions.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Strengths include the high expectations that teachers have for all pupils. Lessons have a clearly communicated, common purpose, within which teachers anticipate and cater for pupils' different needs very well. Teachers show good understanding of how to teach writing. They model skills effectively, making good use of resources including modern technology. They give pupils plenty of good opportunities to read, talk and write and they provide constructive feedback.
- In the best examples seen, staff interacted remarkably well with pupils, listening carefully, probing their ideas and encouraging them to learn independently. However, occasionally, adults did too much of the talking and their questioning did not always draw out pupils' responses well. Sometimes teachers missed opportunities to check pupils' understanding and adapt their plans, which led to some slackening of pupils' workrate.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Pupils' strong sense of themselves as communicators is rooted in the lively curriculum, built round exciting themes which they influence. Pupils have a thorough but enjoyable grounding in the skills of literacy and practise their skills in relevant contexts.
- Teachers enliven their planning by drawing on their own and pupils' enthusiasms. Visits, special events and topics linking English with other subjects make learning feel purposeful. Speaking and listening play a central part in lessons. Wall displays help pupils understand the skills and processes they are working on. Throughout the school, displays reflect pupils' ideas and creativity, expressed in many forms. Writing and performing for real audiences, within and beyond school, have strengthened pupils' confidence in themselves as communicators.
- Pupils spoken to describe a rich mixture of experiences including role play and group problem-solving. They are encouraged to read widely and in

depth, and to write in many forms, sometimes choosing their own topic or style. More pupils than normal say they read and write for pleasure.

- Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and interventions are managed effectively by teachers, working closely with their assistants, so that no pupil is left out of the exciting activities. Brief, bespoke sessions have helped individuals catch up. Some pupils at an early stage of learning English or with communication difficulties have clearly benefited from the good opportunities for speaking and listening.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- The very clear direction for English, and teachers' growing enthusiasm and expertise in realising it, springs from the excellent leadership provided. The subject leader has good insight into the factors affecting pupils' progress in English across the age range, combined with very strong understanding of how to tackle them. Well supported by you, she has inspired staff to teach more adventurously and effectively.
- The school's leaders and managers monitor the quality of provision and pupils' progress rigorously. Searching evaluation of a wide range of evidence has informed the plan for improving English, which shows good awareness of national developments. The plan is ambitious and detailed and is being implemented with clear effect.
- Staff are highly appreciative of senior leaders' practical encouragement. This support has led staff to set higher expectations and use their creativity. Within a clear framework, staff are encouraged to show initiative but also held to account for their pupils' progress. Significant improvements in pupils' achievement confirm the capacity to improve further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the consistency of teaching by continuing to share successful practice in leading learning.

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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector