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Mr M Gallacher
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gallacher

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 12 March 2012 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 parts of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Pupils enter the school with knowledge, understanding and skills which are at or below those found nationally. By the end of Year 2, they reach standards which are broadly average in reading and just below average in writing. In 2011, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was above average, especially in reading.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points although the profile of classes varies considerably from year to year in this small school. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, also make good progress. Pupils make more progress in English than that expected nationally. However, the rate of progress is slightly less for higher attaining pupils.

- The school's assessment information indicates that current pupils are making good progress overall. Progress is consistently better in reading than in writing. The school has identified improving writing as a priority for action.
- In lessons, pupils make good progress. They settle to work promptly and concentrate well. They enjoy the good range of activities provided by teachers. Pupils work together well and share their ideas enthusiastically.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well, setting clear objectives for learning. They structure lessons effectively and maintain a brisk pace to ensure that pupils learn well. They have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and work, as seen in the good quality of handwriting. Teachers use displays effectively to emphasise key learning points and demonstrate effective writing techniques.
- Teachers engage pupils' interest well using a good range of activities. For example, in the lessons observed, older pupils analysed a film, younger pupils used the interactive whiteboard to organise text into paragraphs, while Years 3 and 4 explored vocabulary for a pirate story through discussion. In a phonics lesson, the youngest children benefited from a good range of oral, visual and written tasks to secure understanding of a new sound.
- Teachers use a good range of questions to develop pupils' ideas and check their understanding. They provide effective support for pupils who find learning more difficult but although they set high expectations for more able pupils they do not always give them specific challenges to extend their learning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make clear where they have achieved the objectives and what they need to do to improve their work. They identify key basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar but pupils are not always asked to correct them or to show that they understand how to avoid them in their writing next time.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing full coverage of different types of text and genres, including poetry and non-fiction. The school promotes reading well, encouraging parents and carers to read with children at home. The teaching of sounds as an aid to reading and spelling is well established throughout the school, including adapted programmes for older pupils who still need to secure some skills.
- Teachers use adult-led group activities well to help pupils understand and apply their skills. Pupils also benefit from clear success criteria which help

them to structure their writing and provide a checklist for them to assess whether they have been successful.

- The school provides a sound range of enrichment activities including trips, poetry and story writing competitions. However, pupils do not regularly write for real purposes or audiences such as school or local newsletters.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- The subject leader has a clear vision for English. She knows the strengths and areas for development in English because of her regular evaluation of provision. The subject action plan is focused strongly on relevant areas such as writing. Staff benefit from well-focused training.
- Teachers plan the curriculum effectively to ensure that pupils do not duplicate work in mixed-age classes and to develop skills progressively. They share good practice and assess pupils' work together to ensure consistency.
- Recent training for staff has improved provision in the teaching of reading so that pupils' achievement has improved. Similar approaches for writing have made some improvement but progress is not as rapid as in reading. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy creative approaches to writing and are clear what is expected of them.
- The subject leader monitors provision in English regularly through review of teachers' planning, pupils' work and brief visits to lessons. She ensures that teachers receive clear information on what is working and where there are areas for improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' writing further by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide regular opportunities for pupils to write for real purposes and audiences
 - encourage pupils to recognise key basic errors and provide time for them to correct them and apply what they learn
 - set specific challenges for higher attaining pupils to extend the quality of their work.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector