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Mrs A Callon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Callon

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 8 May 2013 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: meetings with you, the English subject leader and the assessment coordinator; interviews with five pupils from Year 6; hearing three Year 2 pupils read; review of information about pupils' progress; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of a sample of work in books and on display; and observation of eight sessions, including phonics and guided reading.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Standards at the end of Year 6 have been well above average in four of the last five years and current data indicate a similar picture. Children start strongly in Reception and, by the end of Year 2, many are proficient readers and writers.
- Pupils are very well prepared for secondary education. Year 6 pupils are highly confident, articulate speakers and able readers and writers. Their work is often more representative of pupils a year or two older. Writing is a particular strength; it is neatly presented with generally accurate spelling and grammar. Whether a story, poem, report or letter, it is very well structured with mature, often adventurous use of a wide range of

punctuation, words and phrases. Pupils are used to drafting and editing their work on paper but less so using a word processor.

- Boys and girls enjoy reading and writing; they agree that 'literacy is fun'. They read at home, use the school library and talk sensibly about their reading tastes. Younger pupils use their phonic knowledge to segment and blend words but also draw on clues from the text and pictures. They progress to reading aloud confidently, often with good expression and understanding. Year 2 partners helped one another to read information downloaded from QR codes hidden in the wildlife garden and then matched it to the right mini-beast. Pupils from Years 6, 3 and 4 showed good skills in inference and deduction when they discussed the differing personalities and emotional responses of characters in stories.
- Pupils' progress in English is outstanding over time. In 2012, all Year 6 pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, made the two levels' progress expected nationally at Key Stage 2, and just over 40% made three levels' progress in reading and in writing. This was far higher than the national average. Current data also indicate a positive picture.

Teaching in English is outstanding.

- Pupils make very good gains in their knowledge and skills because of consistently strong teaching and support from teachers and teaching assistants. Well-tailored, skilful help enables pupils with particular needs to succeed, or to catch up in their reading and writing.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully, often using activities that engage the pupils fully. For instance, Year 1 pupils were keen to rewrite instructions to help the class puppet grow cress seeds. Similarly, pupils in Years 3 and 4, having seen a video clip of someone falling overboard, became engrossed in writing their own dramatic stories and then posed searching questions to pupils who took the 'hot seat' in the role of 'skipper' or 'man overboard'.
- The teachers share an enthusiasm for English and their subject knowledge is secure. Their high expectations of pupils are met because they model and explain expertly what makes an effective reader and writer. They have provided useful aids, such as questions for parents to ask when their children are reading non-fiction, and key word and alphabet 'mats' to support younger pupils' independent writing.
- The adults are quick to praise, to encourage and to give constructive feedback. Pupils respond to points for improvement and are also adept at commenting on each other's work. There is scope to refine this and also teachers' marking to give an explicit overview of how well success criteria have been met and what will make a difference next time.

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- All pupils become steeped in listening, speaking, reading and writing because the school is very successful in providing a purpose and audience for them to apply their skills. Year 5 pupils, for instance, as part of a study of rivers, looked at the language of poems about rivers before drafting

their own. Classrooms and corridors have vibrant displays of pupils' work and pupils are proud of their contributions.

- Pupils also benefit from a rich programme of additional activities including contributions to the diary of Travelling Ted, reading challenges, script-to-screen workshops and theatre visits.
- The curriculum has changed this year to prepare Year 6 pupils for the new national test in spelling, punctuation and grammar. The school is looking at ways to heighten this work throughout the school. Likewise, changes in how phonics is taught reflect the outcome of the school's review of its results in the first national phonics test for Year 1 pupils. Although there is a firm emphasis on fostering younger pupils' reading and writing through writing tables, notices and displays, there is little in the 'home corner' or outdoor play areas to boost spontaneous use of print. Opportunities are also missed in the school library to create a truly inviting place to read.

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- You and your staff value literacy and language in its widest sense, and share a commitment to helping each pupil achieve his/her best. You and the governors have taken effective strategic decisions to maximise the skills and strengths of staff and to make optimal use of finances to ensure high quality provision in English. The subject leader keeps abreast of national and local initiatives. Good use is being made, for example, of local authority advice on activities appropriate for guided reading sessions.
- The audit and self-evaluation of English provision was accurate and drew on a wide range of evidence including evidence from monitoring teaching and learning, and an analysis of achievement. Leaders know how well different groups of pupils are doing and recent refinements to the tracking system have given a clear picture compared with national figures.
- The action plan for literacy reflects the review of pupils' achievement last year. It identifies relevant priorities but the success criteria are too general to structure a critical evaluation of the action taken.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- exploring additional ways to use information and communication technology as a medium for writing
- creating a stronger invitation to read and write as part of indoor and outdoor play for the youngest pupils, and in the school library.

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.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector