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Miss J Price
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Dear Miss Price

Ofsted 2013–14 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 22 October 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: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of five lessons and listening to pupils reading.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- High-quality play and learning activities enable children in the Reception class to settle quickly and achieve well. The careful attention given to developing children's communication skills is evident in their confident and expressive recital of familiar tales. From average starting points, the proportions of children that reach a good level of development in literacy, communication and language exceed those in most other schools.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 build very successfully on this strong start so that their attainment in reading and writing is significantly above the national averages by the end of Year 2. Improvements to the teaching of letters and the sounds they make, phonics, account for the higher-than-average results achieved in last year's national screening check. When reading

aloud, weaker readers demonstrate a secure understanding of how to blend different letter sounds together to decode unfamiliar words.

- Pupils' reading and their excellent grasp of sentence structure are particular strengths, especially in Year 6. By the time pupils leave the school, standards in reading and writing are exceptionally high. In the most recent Year 6 national tests, three quarters of pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in reading and two thirds attained the same level for grammar, punctuation and spelling. Throughout the school, pupils progress very strongly from their different starting points. The school's most recent assessment information and pupils' written work in books confirm that groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs, achieve equally well.
- Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their handwriting skills, but not all of them acquire a neat and cursive style. During the inspection, several pupils used an inappropriate pencil grip that hindered their formation of letters.

Teaching in English is outstanding.

- Teachers have a very secure knowledge of English, especially in grammar and punctuation. In lessons, they demonstrate important skills and concepts exceptionally well. As a result, pupils have a very good understanding of the conventions of writing. This was particularly impressive in Year 6 where pupils explained knowledgeably how their use of alliteration, metaphor and subordinate clauses would interest the reader.
- In lessons, teaching motivates pupils extremely well so their learning proceeds at a brisk pace. Detailed, written feedback from teachers ensures that pupils correct spelling errors and know how they can improve their work. Pupils have numerous opportunities to edit and redraft their writing, such as in a Year 5 lesson where pupils improved their use of adverbial phrases by editing and redrafting their work on different coloured paper.
- Good questioning skills and the imaginative use of technology enhance pupils' learning. Assessment information is used very effectively to ensure that tasks are set routinely at the right level. Teachers and teaching assistants rigorously check that pupils have understood what it is intended that they should learn in the lesson. Pupils know what they must do in order to raise their attainment because teachers link the learning to individual targets and pupils use the targets to check their work.

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The imaginative range of activities for speaking, listening, reading and writing ensures that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education. Memorable 'blast off' experiences kick-start each theme before the subsequent learning activities build carefully on pupils' interests and capabilities. Pupils experience a range of texts featuring

cultures and beliefs that are different from their own. However, greater use could be made of texts that reflect modern multi-cultural Britain.

- The enjoyment of reading is promoted very effectively. Challenging texts and the frequent opportunities for drama are supplemented by encounters with authors, such as the recent visit from a comic book illustrator. Pupils are enthusiastic readers and talk earnestly of their goal to read for 300 nights.

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- The school's leaders use assessment information very effectively, setting ambitious targets to raise the high standards even further. The headteacher and subject leader speak passionately about English and are very well informed of national developments. Their high expectations and commitment set a clear and shared direction for the subject. This is evident in the consistent approach to displaying important vocabulary and pupils' work to support their learning.
- Improvement planning is highly effective in tackling any dips in English performance. For example, well-targeted staff training has improved the teaching of phonics and a specialist teaching programme for writing enabled two of the most able Year 6 pupils to attain the highest level 6. The arrangements for leaders to check and evaluate the school's progress towards end-of-year objectives are set out very clearly.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reducing the variability in handwriting by ensuring that all pupils use an appropriate pencil grip
- making greater use of texts that reflect different cultures and beliefs to further develop pupils' understanding of modern multi-cultural Britain.

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

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector