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23 July 2007

Ms J Bradley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Bradley

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 9 July to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit had a particular focus on our current survey theme: provision for poetry. 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good. Standards are broadly in line with the national average.

- Pupils start with lower language skills than is typical, but make good progress throughout the school. Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are only slightly below the national average. Over the past four years, results in tests for eleven year olds have varied from below to above average, depending on individuals' starting points and how long they have been in the school.
- All pupils make good progress in English. Results for eleven year olds in 2004 placed the school in the highest achieving third of schools nationally, and last year it was in the top three percent, which was outstanding. Unvalidated results for 2007 suggest that good levels of achievement have been sustained.

- The pupils' progress in reading is better than in writing. An emphasis on developing phonic knowledge and daily reading time has improved reading. The inspection confirmed that progress in reading and speaking and listening is good for all age groups, and satisfactory and improving in writing.
- In the early years and Key Stage 1, pupils' emergent writing shows increasing control. Older pupils learn to construct writing coherently but, as the school has identified, handwriting requires improvement and some skills needed for higher levels in writing have not been consolidated by all those with good reading skills.
- The very few pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress in line with their peers, including those at an early stage of learning English. However, the school is aware that girls tend to outperform boys.

### Quality of teaching and learning of English

Teaching and learning are good.

- Boys and girls in Years 3 and 4 expressed great enjoyment of English, saying it was often exciting and "mysterious", with lots of varied activities for them to get involved in. Pupils across the school behaved very well and stayed interested in lessons.
- All the teaching seen was at least good and there were outstanding features to be seen. Relationships were very good and effective classroom management meant pupils made good progress. Teaching assistants are very well involved.
- Teachers share their lively enthusiasm for English through a good range of well chosen tasks which make pupils want to talk and listen, read and write. However, pupils' work suggests some need more help to develop their writing fully.
- Teachers are effective at leading pupils to reflect on their learning. Marking is of good quality and provides helpful feedback to pupils on strengths and areas for improvement. Pupils know what they are doing to make their work better, and individual targets are followed up so they know how they have made progress.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The school ensures a good balance of work in English and makes effective use of national guidance. It uses a broad range of approaches including good use of speaking and listening, drama activities, different media and information and communication technology (ICT) to engage pupils' interest and develop their skills. This has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes to English.

- The school offers a very good range of enrichment activities to support work in English, such as the encounter with a collection of owls which children found fascinating. It makes very effective links between English and other subjects, so that literacy skills are developed in realistic contexts.
- Pupils have good access to interesting books and a daily reading period.
- The school makes good use of ICT to bring the wider world into the classroom, to help pupils visualise abstract ideas and explore texts together, and to stimulate and refine writing.
- Displays of pupils' writing very effectively model how poems, reports or narratives are formed. Pupils have good opportunities for extended writing.

### Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- Clear direction by you and the well informed subject leader has brought about a strong improvement in outcomes for pupils in recent years. The subject leader has strong subject knowledge and expertise in teaching across the age range, reflected in the guidance given to colleagues.
- Very good tracking of progress and accurate analysis of outcomes in different areas of the subject have led to an excellent understanding of what needs to improve and what makes a difference. The action plan is clear and specific.
- Professional development has had a good effect on the work of all staff. The subject coordinator has monitored pupils' work and progress, and worked effectively with teachers and support staff so strategies for raising achievement in the subject are applied consistently and with good understanding. This has led to the good quality of teaching and accurate assessment.

### Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good

- Pupils enjoy poetry. They are given good opportunities to read and share poems linked to different areas of the curriculum. Having recently worked with a visiting poet, pupils showed good understanding of how to craft a poem, and some write poems well. Pupils have entered their writing to a national poetry competition each year and seen their work published.
- Teachers show lively enthusiasm for poetry and are well supported by helpful resources and guidance from the subject leader. They use

varied and effective methods to encourage pupils of all ages to explore and experiment with poetic language and to refine their writing.

- Teachers help pupils to empathise and talk perceptively and seriously about emotions, and this too has a positive impact on their understanding and writing of poems.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

- The school's high expectations apply to all pupils, and teaching and assessment are successful in ensuring that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who join the school with little English, move forward at a good pace towards appropriate individual targets.
- Interventions to boost progress in literacy take place within lessons, so all pupils have good access to the full breadth of the curriculum in English.
- Training for support staff is of top quality; they are fully included in planning and assessment and make an excellent contribution in supporting vulnerable children.
- Teachers give able, gifted and talented pupils suitable challenges and opportunities for enrichment and extension, to which they respond well.
- Outcomes show that all groups, including those taking free school meals, achieve well. However, girls do better than boys.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring pupils learn to handwrite fluently
- consolidating higher level writing skills.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles  
Her Majesty's Inspector