

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



18 October 2007

Mrs Wendy Martin
Headteacher
Coates Primary School
The Fold, Coates
Whittlesey
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE7 2BP

Dear Mrs Martin

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 9 October 2007 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: independent learning 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.

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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

- Year groups are small and this leads to variations in test results from year to year. Attainment on entry is broadly average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been in line with average in English over recent years. The 2007 results were slightly above average.
- Standards of writing have improved as a result of recent school action. Pupils consistently do better in writing than reading at the end of Key Stage 1 and the 2007 results also showed higher standards in writing for the oldest pupils.

- Contextual value added data over the past four years suggests that pupils make satisfactory progress overall across Key Stage 2.
- The school's view is that progress in English is good. Performance data confirms that some pupils do better than expected. For instance, the Year 6 pupils who were tested in 2007 made better than average progress. However, while the school currently measures the progress of individual pupils, it does not use this evidence systematically to analyse trends in achievement over time.
- Evidence from lessons confirmed that standards in English are average. However, some of the older pupils are very confident and speak maturely, showing that they have made good progress in speaking and listening.
- Pupils' attitudes towards English are positive. They are keen to do well and enjoy class discussions, including opportunities for active learning.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Lessons observed were satisfactory overall, with some aspects that were good. This is broadly in line with the schools' own monitoring which identifies variability in quality across the school.
- Positive features of teaching observed included: the setting of challenging work for pupils; good use of a range of speaking and listening activities; and good relationships with pupils. The most effective lesson made use of active strategies that enthused pupils and produced a lively response.
- Opportunities were missed in some lessons to make more effective use of classroom assistants and learning objectives were not always used clearly enough to direct pupils' progress.
- The school has an effective policy on setting learning targets for pupils. This is implemented consistently and the older pupils find this very helpful. Targets are reviewed and enhanced by the setting of regular unaided writing tasks, although teachers' marking too rarely reinforces the targets that are set. As a result, some pupils forget what their targets are.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- Recent changes have enhanced the writing curriculum in school and led to higher standards. For instance, the school has introduced writing journals for pupils. Pupils enjoy the flexibility this gives them although the school acknowledges that the approach is not yet consistently effective across all classes.
- Writing is also supported by regular unaided tasks that are well moderated by all teachers.

- Provision for reading is good, with emphasis on phonics in the early years, following recent guidance from the Primary National Strategy. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and the school is currently improving its library in order to improve support for reading.
- The curriculum is enriched by links with schools abroad that enhance work in literacy, and activities such as the annual Christmas production and visits, for example, to the theatre.
- There is a good range of intervention programmes that help pupils with particular needs to make progress in the English curriculum.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are good in English.

- The subject coordinator provides good leadership in English. She is an effective classroom practitioner and well able to share good practice.
- There is a clear sense of direction to English work. Changes in teaching writing have led to higher standards and there is a good focus currently on developing speaking and listening.
- Approaches to monitoring and evaluation are systematic and effective. The subject leader monitors a wide range of activities in English including the use of journals, unaided writing and pupils' handwriting. The school has reviewed its practice well in the light of changes to the Literacy framework; the subject leader keeps colleagues fully informed about developments in English.
- The subject leader's monitoring of lessons is further supported by your own observations. These provide good feedback to colleagues about their practice.
- The subject improvement plan clearly identifies priorities for development although the success criteria do not focus enough on outcomes for pupils.

Independent learning in English

Independent learning in English is satisfactory.

- Positive elements include the introduction of pupil journals that are designed to encourage pupils to write independently and to choose their own topics for writing.
- The school's policy on unaided writing also gives pupils regular opportunities to write independently and without the normal level of teacher intervention provided within classrooms.
- The school encourages older pupils to choose their own reading books and most pupils appear to enjoy reading.

Inclusion

Inclusion in English is good.

- The school has a systematic approach to supporting pupils with particular needs. It provides a good range of intervention programmes, all delivered by a trained teaching assistant. The progress of individual pupils is tracked well and this ensures that they receive the support they need.
- Evidence provided by the school shows that some less able pupils make very good progress as they move through the school.
- Classroom approaches, including the use of pair and group work, ensure that all pupils are fully integrated within lessons, with good opportunities to work together and learn from each other.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making better use of performance data in order to monitor more closely any trends and patterns in pupils' achievement
- improving the consistency of teaching across all classes, and
- clarifying the impact of subject development planning on outcomes for learners.

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

Philip Jarrett HMI
Subject Adviser for English