

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs M Newman
Headteacher
Shotley Primary School
Main Road
Shotley
Suffolk
IP9 1NR

Dear Mrs Newman

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 April 2009 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit looked at key areas of the subject and 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 five lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in English is good. Standards are broadly average.

- Pupils enter the school with knowledge, understanding and skills generally lower than those found nationally, especially in communication and language.
- In 2008, at the end of Year 2, standards were broadly average with reading stronger than writing.
- At Key Stage 2, standards have been above average in previous years. However, in 2008 for Year 6 they were broadly average, reflecting the profile of that particular year group.
- Pupils at both key stages make good progress from their starting points.
- Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, some of which are complex, also make generally good progress.

- Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning in English. They concentrate well, settle to work quickly and collaborate very effectively. They speak with confidence and enjoy opportunities to take part in drama, role play and other activities.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and, in the best lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know and can apply key subject terms confidently.
- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly with clear objectives, ensuring that work caters for pupils with different attainment.
- In the best lessons, teachers set very high expectations and build pupils' confidence to tackle challenging tasks. They use very effective questions and ensure that pupils have time to think and compose their answers carefully.
- In some lessons, teachers over-direct pupils and miss opportunities to involve them in discussing what they have learnt. As such, approaches to teaching and encouraging speaking and listening are not consistent from class to class.
- Teachers mark pupils' work in detail and their comments generally focus on how to improve further. Pupils know their targets in English and are familiar with the criteria for levels which they sometimes use to assess their own work and that of their peers.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- There is a broad range of topics which provides pupils with the opportunity to study a variety of texts, genres and different styles of writing.
- The curriculum across the school is currently under review and teachers are taking opportunities to link subjects and to put learning into context. Increasingly, this allows pupils to write for real purposes and audiences, although this is not yet fully developed.
- There is an effective focus on the stages of thinking and preparation before writing, using drama, role play and other activities well to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Pupils enjoy using computers for research and in composing their writing. They also enjoy reading in class and out of school.

Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- You and your subject leader have a very clear vision of how the curriculum and teaching in English should develop, based on fostering enjoyment for pupils and building their independence as learners.
- The subject leader monitors provision regularly and reviews progress closely using the very thorough system for recording pupils' achievement. Through this analysis she identifies appropriate priorities for development and ensures relevant training and discussion for staff.
- Current priorities, such as the curriculum review and the focus on preparation for writing, are undertaken with enthusiasm by staff and there are signs of impact in pupils' enjoyment of the subject and increasing confidence as learners.
- The school has welcomed pupils with a range of complex needs and has ensured that they are integrated well with effective support from teaching assistants.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing greater consistency of approach to teaching and learning across classes to ensure that all pupils become confident, independent learners
- consolidating the recent revision to the curriculum to provide effective opportunities for pupils to write for real purposes and audiences.

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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector