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Mr A Robinson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Robinson

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 March 2010 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit included some discussion on our current survey theme of provision for gifted and talented pupils 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 included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- In 2009, attainment at the end of Year 6 was above average. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 and Level 5 in the national tests was above average. Girls perform better than boys in relation to the attainment of each group nationally.
- Over the last three years, pupils' progress has been significantly above average. The progress for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is at least satisfactory and often good.
- In the lessons observed, pupils made good progress. They concentrated very well, worked together collaboratively and settled to work without any

delay. They enjoyed opportunities for role-play and discussion, responding enthusiastically to teachers' questions. They used their targets and success criteria well to guide their writing.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly with objectives which are matched closely to pupils' needs.
- Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and teachers use a good range of activities to interest pupils, especially opportunities for talk and drama.
- Teachers' questioning usually encourages pupils to respond in detail, providing explanation. However, questions are not always pitched specifically to challenge pupils of differing attainment and understanding.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support to groups and individuals in guided work on specific tasks.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress carefully and set clear targets. The marking of pupils' work is detailed and consistently identifies areas for improvement. These inform lesson objectives. However, the comprehensive system of assessment and targets does not always highlight clearly enough the key priorities for some lower attaining pupils.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is good.

- There is broad coverage of different genres and texts across a good balance of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Teachers' lesson planning reflects pupils' targets and provides tasks and support at different levels.
- Increasingly, there are opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills through other subjects. In the best examples they write for real purposes and audiences, such as letters to soldiers serving overseas and bids to the local community fund. The subject leader plans to extend thematic approaches within the curriculum to offer more regular and realistic contexts for pupils to apply their skills.
- There is a good range of enrichment activities, including a school newspaper, regular trips and class collaborations, such as writing and performing a playscript.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The subject leader has a very clear vision for the subject, focused on improvement and based on a very thorough audit of provision.

- The subject leader sets high expectations, is well-organised and has developed a shared understanding of priorities among staff. Systems such as assessment and target-setting are increasingly consistent across the school.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of teaching and ensure that effective practice is shared.
- There is very comprehensive monitoring of teachers' planning, pupils' work and progress which informs the priorities in a detailed action plan. Regular review of pupils' performance guides lesson planning and ensures that those pupils needing additional help receive it promptly.

#### Provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

- The school has good systems for identifying pupils who are gifted or talented in English.
- Teachers are expected to plan lessons to ensure challenge for this group of pupils and this often leads to them setting specific targets to be achieved.
- There are opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to contribute to school initiatives, such as the newspaper, and also to participate in local authority projects such as designing a questionnaire to allow pupils to suggest ways in which boys' writing might be improved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' attainment and progress further, especially that of boys, by:
  - developing teachers' use of questioning to provide challenge for the full range of pupils
  - ensuring that teachers use the school's assessment systems effectively to provide precise targets which are helpful in improving the work of pupils at different levels of attainment
  - developing opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in English in broader contexts and for real purposes and audiences.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school. As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg  
Her Majesty's Inspector