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Mrs L Hill
Headteacher
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Sir William Hill
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Dear Mrs Hill

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 February 2009 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 a focus on our current survey theme of creativity 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English are above average. Pupils' achievement is good.

- Year groups are very small and caution needs to be exercised in interpreting performance data. Assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) suggests that performance in English is broadly in line with the national expectations. Observation in the current EYFS shows that many pupils are achieving highly, especially in oral communication.
- Standards have been consistently above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 over recent years. Nearly all pupils achieve national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and many reach the higher

Level 5, especially in reading. This confirms good achievement overall in English.

- Boys achieve as well as girls overall in English; this is better than the national picture. However, while their results in reading match the girls, they are less effective at reaching the higher levels in writing.
- Standards of speaking and listening are very high. The pupils are confident and articulate. Many of them speak very maturely. They are given good opportunities in English lessons to work together and express their ideas in depth.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning of English is good.

- Pupils enjoy their lessons in English and are very keen to learn. Overall, their attitudes towards learning and their capacity to make further progress are excellent.
- The quality of teaching observed was good overall. Relationships with teachers and other pupils were especially good. Strengths of teaching observed included: lively lessons that engaged pupils well; good opportunities for discussion and collaborative work; emphasis on pupils' reviewing their own work; and well managed lessons with high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- All classes contain mixed age groups and lessons did not always identify sufficiently the needs of the most able pupils. More time was needed on occasion for pupils to complete written work.
- The quality of marking is very high. The best marking is exceptionally detailed and identifies areas for improvement well. Despite this, pupils are not clear enough about the next steps in their own learning in English. This is partly because pupils are not routinely set curricular targets in English and teachers' suggestions for improvement in marking are not always followed up systematically.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is good.

- Pupils enjoy English lessons and praise the good links between English and topic work, opportunities for discussion work, and drama activities. The curriculum is enhanced by good information and communication technology (ICT) provision and some interesting media work, some of it in collaboration with the local secondary school.
- The curriculum is developing to make better use of the local environment and provide greater flexibility for teachers, as seen in the writing produced by reception and Year 1 pupils about the snow. The older pupils made good use of the school grounds within their literacy lesson during my visit.

- The school accepts that the provision for extra-curricular activities and further enrichment is limited at present but has plans to improve this as the year develops.
- Good opportunities are provided to apply literacy skills in other contexts, for example, extending reading and writing within the Second World War project. However, the scrutiny of work showed that pupils complete too little extended writing in English lessons.

Leadership and management of English

- You and the subject leader for English are both newly appointed. You have both identified some areas for development including improving pupils' writing. You have also written an action plan to develop the role of the subject leader and involve her in auditing provision. This is a sensible start.
- There are good tracking procedures in place that enable teachers to identify any under-performance. You have already been involved in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning across all classes.
- Standards have risen over the past couple of years, especially in writing. This shows the positive impact of recent management decisions.
- You have a clear view about how to improve creativity in English. This emphasises the importance of developing pupils' independent learning, making better use of the outdoor environment, and providing practical experiences that will inform writing. You also hope that teachers will make more flexible use of the school day and opportunities for extended projects. The current work with Year 4-6 pupils shows good evidence of both creative teaching and creative learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing pupils with more opportunities to produce extended writing in English
- developing pupils' understanding of how to improve their work
- exploring ways in which the most able pupils can be fully challenged in English lessons.

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