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Mr T Bowden
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bowden

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 November 2011 to look at work 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observations of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment in English has been consistently above average in recent years, especially in reading which is a strength. In writing, most pupils achieve the expected level of attainment; however, some more able pupils failed to achieve the higher level in 2011. Boys' attainment in English, although lower than the girls, was above the national average. Pupils are able to articulate their thoughts well. They have good listening skills.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter school with skills that are broadly in line with expectations for their age. They make good progress in all areas of communication, language and literacy and by the time they enter Year 1, they have reached a good level of achievement in line with expectations.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils whose first language is not English make equally good progress and their achievement is good.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- The teaching observed was good. Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. They plan lessons that are interesting and engage pupils effectively in learning. As a result, pupils respond well. In one lesson observed, pupils were considering how to improve narrative text to engage the reader. Effective use of paired talk enabled pupils to present their ideas well and suggest improvements to the text to create suspense.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in English. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. The skilled and well-trained teaching assistants provide good support in lessons.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked with encouraging comments. Some advice is given on how pupils can improve their work.
- Regular assessments inform teachers' planning, which is well organised and matches the differing abilities of pupils. Targets for improvement in writing are set. However, pupils are not always aware of when they have reached their target. In addition, there is little guidance on the next steps pupils need to take to achieve a higher level, particularly for more able pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum provides a good balance between all aspects of English, and there is a good focus on phonics and a systematic approach to reading which results in high levels of attainment.
- The creative approach to the curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects and this particularly motivates boys. One class studying the Ancient Egyptians were successfully able to write recounts using interesting and imaginative vocabulary.
- Pupils' work in English is suitably enhanced by a good range of enrichment activities including trips to the theatre and places of interest. Visits from authors and a range of correspondents and presenters from the media engage pupils effectively and serve to broaden their English knowledge.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is good.

- The English subject leader has a very clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in English. All staff work effectively as a team and there is a common commitment to achieving high standards and driving improvement.
- Accurate self-evaluation informs the most important areas in development planning. The wide range of monitoring activities includes the analysis of pupils' progress, lesson observations, discussions with pupils, and checking teachers' planning to ensure that activities and approaches meet the learning needs of all pupils. Pupils' engagement in learning, particularly boys in writing, has improved. This demonstrates that the capacity for further improvement is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- systematically providing clear guidance to pupils in marking to enable them to know how to improve their writing across all areas of the curriculum
- making more effective use of pupils' targets through regular monitoring to challenge pupils, particularly more able pupils.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector