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Miss C Driscoll
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Driscoll

Ofsted 2013–14 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 13 June 2013 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 observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English is good.

- Last summer, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected levels in reading and writing was above the national average. This is good progress given that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was below the national average. However, too few pupils reached the higher levels in reading. To address this, there has been a strong focus on accelerating pupils' progress in reading this year. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that this has been effective and that more pupils are attaining higher levels in reading throughout Key Stage 2.
- In Key Stage 1, attainment in reading is consistently above the national average. The standards in writing have shown a steady improvement over the last three years and, last summer, pupils' attainment in writing was in line with national average. Pupils' achievement in the Year 1 screening check in phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make)

was below the national average last year. The school has responded effectively to this. Pupils are now working in smaller groups with additional one-to-one support where appropriate. An above average percentage of pupils in the current year 1 is now on track to meet or exceed the expected levels in this year's phonic screening check.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communication, language and literacy below those expected for their age. They make good progress and the majority of pupils attain the expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1.
- Groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs, those who qualify for additional government funding (known as 'Pupil Premium') and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in reading and writing. This is because the school trains teachers and teaching assistants well and provides effective early interventions to support such pupils. Evidence in pupils' books supports the school's assessments and shows that gaps in attainment and progress have narrowed between pupils eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils across both key stages.

Teaching in English is good.

- Teachers make imaginative links between reading, writing and speaking and listening. They plan lessons carefully and use popular children's authors to capture pupils' imagination. In one lesson, pupils were eager to read the next chapter of the class book and were sharing their responses to the plot and the characters enthusiastically. When discussing the author's use of language, they used grammatical terms independently, correctly and purposefully. This helped them to understand the key features of effective writing.
- The school has had a strong focus on improving the way teachers provide feedback to pupils. Marking in books is now good. Pupils are very aware of what they need to do to improve their writing. They routinely assess their own progress against their targets and support each other well.
- On-going assessment techniques, such as probing questioning by teachers, support and extend pupils' learning well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of resources, such as digital technologies, to support their teaching and provide exciting opportunities for writing in different styles. There is great emphasis placed on writing for a range of purposes in all the subjects taught. However, there is a lack of consistency in the approach to handwriting, including letter formation, and presentation. These aspects of English are not of a high enough standard across the school.

The curriculum in English is good.

- The school has recently made some changes to the curriculum and strengthened links with international topics. The curriculum is well-planned and receptive to the needs of pupils. A strength is the way in which links are made between English and other subjects. Strategies to keep ahead of national changes and continue to raise standards are effective, for example, in preparing pupils for the newly introduced grammar test in Year 6.
- The curriculum is very effectively enriched through trips to places of interest and a wide range of clubs, including film club and language clubs. The school frequently invites visitors, such as theatre groups, artists and popular children's authors, to come into school to talk and work with pupils. For example, the school library was opened by a former Children's Laureate. These activities enhance pupils' love of English.

Leadership and management of English are good.

- Leaders make good use of accurate assessment and detailed monitoring data to set targets for improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' attainment. They are passionate about accelerating improvements in pupils' achievement and they take effective action in response to any issues raised. There is clear evidence that standards are improving across the school and there is a good capacity to build on this in the future.
- Improvement planning is of good quality because it clearly identifies areas that need to improve, plans suitable actions and timescales and provides clear criteria for success.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards of presentation in pupils' English work across the school
- developing a common approach to the teaching of handwriting
- ensuring that errors in letter formation are consistently corrected.

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

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector