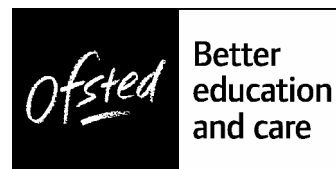


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05 October 2006

Mrs J Jordon
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Dear Mrs Jordon

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28-29 September 2006 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit had a particular focus on our current survey theme: provision for poetry.

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 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in English are good overall, although few able pupils achieve the highest standards at Key Stage 4.

- Standards are significantly above average in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- Pupils enter the school with average standards in English, although their achievement in writing is much weaker than that in reading. Low achieving pupils make particularly good progress in Key Stage 3, but do not always sustain this through Key Stage 4. Very few

pupils achieve the highest grades for GCSE English. Post-16 students usually meet, and sometimes exceed, expectations in AS and A2 examinations.

- Extended, original writing by able pupils is often of high quality, particularly in Key Stage 4 and post-16.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in the subject is good overall, although some of the teaching observed was only just satisfactory.

- Good lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers make effective use of resources, involve the pupils in a range of activities and engage them in discussion and reflection.
- Less effective teaching is busy but not necessarily productive with some lack of clarity in learning objectives.
- In general, teachers do not encourage personal responses from pupils and make limited use of open questions.
- Planning is relevant and closely linked to national requirements for English. Plans refer to the needs of different groups in a class, including very able pupils. However, teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge or extension for the most able pupils.
- The quality of assessment is a strength. Marking of written work is constructive and detailed. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed and relevant targets are set to help them improve. Teachers are caring and supportive to pupils.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in the subject is good.

- The curriculum covers all relevant areas and planning for progression is good.
- In Key Stages 3 and 4, there is a strong focus on literacy and developing writing skills. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of literature, including a good range of writing from other cultures.
- A useful bridging unit is introduced at the end of Key Stage 3 to prepare pupils for Key Stage 4.
- The post-16 curriculum fully meets the requirements of examination courses and is appropriate to the needs of the students.

Leadership and management of English

The quality of leadership and management of the subject are good.

- Leadership and management of English are largely effective in promoting consistency and quality.
- Data analysis and evaluation are very thorough and lead to clear actions and targets to bring about improvements.
- Teaching is regularly monitored by the subject leader and the work of the department is carefully monitored by senior managers.

Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good.

- Pupils and teachers enjoy poetry and it features in the curriculum in all years. Units of work include a wide range of poetry with good attention to different poetic forms. Themes and content are matched well to the interests of young people, for example, a study of love poetry in Year 9, which includes contemporary writing and that from previous centuries.
- Pupils write poetry of good quality. However, there are few opportunities for the publication of pupils' writing beyond displays in the classroom.

Inclusion

Inclusion in the subject is good.

- Achievement is satisfactory or good for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils work well together in lessons and those with special needs are appropriately supported by teaching staff and learning assistants.
- Pupils who enter the school with below average levels of literacy make particularly good progress in Key Stage 3, but able pupils do not always make sufficient progress in achieving their potential, particularly in Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring able pupils consistently achieve their potential in English
- ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching
- developing teachers' skills in promoting pupils' personal responses to their work in English.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/Local Learning Skills Council. 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

Eileen Hill
Additional Inspector