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Mr S Dudgeon  
Headteacher  
Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic  
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292 Harrogate Road  
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Dear Mr Dudgeon

### **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 18 October 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 observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Standards are high. Attainment has been consistently well above average at the end of Key Stage 2 in recent years. The proportion of pupils who achieve the higher Level 5 is also better than average. The gap between reading and writing, which has been considerable in the past, closed substantially last year. The gender gap has also closed although fewer boys than girls achieve Level 5 in writing.
- The proportion of pupils who made expected progress by the end of Key Stage 2 was well above average last year and the school achieved most of its challenging targets. Given average literacy skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, progress is at least good across the school.
- Attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Pupils are very keen to learn and do well; this is seen in high standards of presentation. Behaviour was

consistently very good in lessons observed. Pupils worked together well in small groups and showed a good capacity for independent learning.

### **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- Pupils were uniformly positive about English and named it as one of their favourite lessons. They like the variety in lessons and the links made with their topic work.
- Strengths of teaching in lessons observed included: very good relationships; pupils' awareness of individual and group targets, and assessment criteria; well-planned lessons, including the provision for guided writing; and use of a good range of interactive strategies.
- There were no significant weaknesses in the lessons observed. At times, the learning objectives were not precise enough. For example, teachers tend to use broad assessment focuses or longer-term objectives but without sufficient clarity about the precise learning for individual lessons.
- Assessment is very strong. Pupils are aware of their targets and mostly understand what they need to do to improve. Marking is very detailed and helpful across the school. The target-setting process works well and there is a good consistency of approach in assessment across the school.

### **Quality of the curriculum in English**

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Although the English curriculum is broadly conventional, it is enriched by a host of initiatives. There is especially good emphasis on drama, speaking and listening. Information and communication technology, including media technology, is used very well. Pupils use cameras to make advertisements and their own films. The school's Learning Platform is used very well for homework tasks, to showcase pupils' work, and for pupils to email each other.
- The reading curriculum is very strong. Positive elements include: a systematic approach to phonics; involving parents in reading in school; regular class reading of stories and novels; and well-planned guided reading. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and speak well about books.
- Links between the English programme and the school's broader curriculum are good. Pupils benefit from exciting contexts for writing and speaking through events such as the 'arrival' of aliens from outer space. They also enjoy the themed days or weeks which are often used to promote literacy. The use of learning logs or extended homework activities is very successful and leads to good quality work.
- The topic-based curriculum builds in a good number of visits each year and these contribute to the development of literacy. In addition, some specific English enrichments include regular visits from theatre groups and, occasionally, from writers or journalists.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in English**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- Subject leadership is very strong. The two subject leaders are enthusiastic and full of ideas; they work together well. Supported by other members of the leadership team, they have maintained and promoted high standards in English.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress, including key groups of pupils, is very thorough and effective. This enables the school to identify any underperformance and target specific additional support to pupils' particular needs. The school's detailed improvement and literacy plans focus well on issues from previous inspections although there is too little direct identification of ways of continuing to improve teaching and learning.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. The school has identified previous weaknesses in writing and action is leading to higher standards. Monitoring and evaluation are very thorough and effective. There is good emphasis on feedback from pupils, together with regular lesson observations, work scrutinies, targeted monitoring events and very effective moderation of teachers' assessments in English. Records of lesson observations are helpful although they tend to emphasise aspects of teaching rather than outcomes in the lesson for pupils.
- The capacity for further improvement is at least good. English has improved substantially over the past five years. There is no complacency in the school but, rather, a strong commitment to continue to get better.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- producing an action plan for further improvements to teaching in English to include, for example, the more effective use of clear learning objectives in lessons and more emphasis on outcomes for pupils in lesson observations.

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

**Philip Jarrett**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**