

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr M Kitley
Headteacher
Woodlands Primary School
Winding Way
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP2 9DY

Dear Mr Kitley

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils during my visit on Thursday 31 January 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; a learning walk and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is good.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is good.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 over the past few years has been slightly below that found in other schools nationally in reading and writing, and last year attainment was well below average. However, this was largely due to the high percentage of low attaining pupils who joined the school at the end of the key stage or who had special educational needs; those pupils who started the key stage in Year 3 made good progress from well below average starting points. Pupils in the current Year 6, who also started the key stage with attainment well below expected levels, have made good progress and are on track to achieve the expected levels in reading and come close to this in writing. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that this positive picture is reflected throughout the key stage, although more needs to be done to raise standards in handwriting.

- There is secure evidence that previous low attainment in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 has been reversed this year. Pupils currently in Year 2 have made good progress and are on track to meet or exceed the expected levels in reading and writing by the end of the year. This is because the school has placed a strong focus on accelerating pupils' progress in reading and writing. Last summer's Year 1 screening in phonics (linking letters with the sounds that they make) showed that pupils were doing considerably better than average.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communication and language and literacy significantly below those expected for their age, particularly in speaking and listening. They make consistently good progress and most come close to attaining the expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1.
- Groups of pupils - such as those with special educational needs, and those who qualify for additional government funding (known as 'Pupil Premium') - make good progress in reading and writing. This is because the school provides effective early interventions which are carefully matched to the individual needs of such pupils.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge, especially in phonics, and make good use of a range of resources, such as information and communication technology, to support their teaching. Lessons are very well structured and planned. They take account of previous learning and the effective use of on-going assessment techniques means that plans are suitably adjusted to take account of pupils' emerging needs.
- Creative and often inspirational teaching motivates pupils well and ensures a brisk pace to most lessons. This was illustrated by the imaginative way in which the 'Story Making Project' is being taught so that there is a buzz of enthusiasm for writing throughout the school. Although occasionally opportunities are missed to embed younger pupils' skills in forming the letters of the alphabet correctly, phonics is well taught and pupils' reading, speaking and listening have improved considerably. Although writing is also improving as a result of good teaching, the school recognises that pens are under-used in Key Stage 2 and there is a need to tighten their approach towards teaching handwriting.
- The school has been proactive in encouraging pupils to read widely and often for a range of purposes. For example, strategies to involve pupils in selecting book purchases for the very well-equipped and organised library are helping to raise boys' attainment in reading.
- Although the untidy presentation of pupils' writing occasionally goes unchallenged, the marking of their work is good, with written comments

that are positive, detailed and evaluative. Pupils are aware of their targets and in older classes they routinely assess their own progress against achieving these, so have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The curriculum is outstanding because national initiatives have been imaginatively adapted to meet the very specific learning needs of all the pupils in reading, writing, speaking and listening. It is kept under constant review and provides an exceptionally rich and varied programme which fires pupils' enthusiasm. There is a strong focus on literacy across the curriculum and a strength is the way in which writing is purposeful and consistently identifies real audiences. Independent reading, writing, speaking and listening are extremely well promoted and skills are systematically developed. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and confident, developing a love of literature and writing, and their achievement is rapidly improving. This rich curriculum is also enhanced by a range of trips and visits and the well-established link with Salisbury Playhouse, where pupils regularly perform plays such as 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' by William Shakespeare.

Effectiveness of leadership in and management of English

The effectiveness of leadership in and management of English is good.

- Passionate leadership is effectively driving forward improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. Leaders at all levels make good use of accurate assessment and detailed monitoring data to set targets and measure the impact of training and initiatives on pupils' achievement. They are successful in engaging parents in supporting their children's learning and there is clear evidence that standards are improving across the school. Consequently, there is a good capacity to improve in the future.
- Improvement planning identifies appropriate actions to address weaknesses. However, it is not always made clear how success will be measured against outcomes for pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that recent improvements in attainment are securely embedded
- developing a common approach towards teaching handwriting
- tightening improvement plans so that success criteria are clearly measurable against pupils' outcomes.

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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector