

# English at the crossroads

An evaluation of English in primary and secondary schools, 2005/08

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This report is based principally on evidence from inspections of English between April 2005 and March 2008 in 242 maintained schools in England. Part A focuses on the key inspection findings in the context of broadly static standards since the previous subject report of 2005. Part B identifies areas for improvement. Both parts of the report give examples of good practice. The report argues that the most effective schools are those that have revised their English curriculum to meet changes in modern technology and pupils' developing literacy needs.

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## Executive summary

This report is based on evidence from inspections of English between April 2005 and March 2008 in 122 primary schools and 120 secondary schools in England. It also draws on other reports published by Ofsted, evaluations of the National Strategies, discussions with teachers and others, and national test and examination results. It reviews developments since Ofsted's previous English report in 2005.<sup>1</sup>

Part A highlights the main strengths and weaknesses in English and presents the evidence. Part B provides a commentary on it and draws attention to the areas that need to be tackled if provision for English in schools is to be more effective.

Standards in English have risen slowly since 2004. The gap between boys' and girls' performance remains. Across the age range, particular groups of pupils, including some minority ethnic groups, achieve less well than others. White British boys eligible for free school meals are amongst the lowest performers in the country.

Despite this, provision for English was good or outstanding in well over half the schools visited, although it was better in primary than secondary schools. In the best instances, headteachers valued the subject highly and recognised the vital contribution it made to pupils' learning. They provided strong leadership and consistent support for the subject leaders; these had a clear vision and a secure rationale for developing English further. Where provision was weaker, subject leaders introduced change in an uncritical way and did not have a clear understanding of where improvements were needed or how they might be achieved.

Teaching was good or outstanding in seven in 10 of the lessons seen across both phases and very few lessons were inadequate. English is a popular subject and the proportion of students who choose to study it in the sixth form is high. Most pupils involved in the survey enjoyed English and made good progress. However, too much teaching was no better than satisfactory and did not enable lower-attaining pupils to make the good progress that they needed in order to catch up. Pupils who were less enthusiastic about the subject and made poorer progress said that it had too little to do with their lives or interests outside school. In particular, it took insufficient account of their developing literacy needs in an age of substantial technological change.

The report emphasises the gap in performance between the most effective schools and the rest. The most effective schools provided a dynamic and productive English curriculum that responded to changes in society and pupils' literacy needs, leading to higher standards. However, if English is to improve further, schools need to focus

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<sup>1</sup> *English 2000–05: a review of inspection evidence* (HMI 2351), Ofsted, 2005; [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/English-2000-05-a-review-of-inspection-evidence/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/English-2000-05-a-review-of-inspection-evidence/(language)/eng-GB).

more consistently on a number of important areas, including helping children and young people to become independent learners; improving the quality of assessment; raising the performance of boys; and improving the teaching of writing. To do this, they need more consistent support from other agencies in identifying and sharing good practice, possibly through the establishment of national and regional centres for English, similar to those that already exist for mathematics and science.

## Key findings

- Standards in English have risen since 2004. However, the rate of improvement has been slow.
- The gap in performance between girls and boys remains and particular groups of pupils, including some minority ethnic groups, achieve less well than others. The standards attained by White British boys eligible for free school meals are amongst the lowest.
- The quality of teaching was good or outstanding in seven in 10 of the lessons seen. Practical approaches and enthusiastic teaching, underpinned by secure subject knowledge, engaged pupils and gave them good opportunities to express ideas. Taking pupils' views into account when planning lessons, and motivating boys through practical activities, enhanced pupils' learning.
- In the lessons that were no better than satisfactory, planning for pupils' learning was not clear enough and there was too much direction by the teacher. Such teaching often had only a limited impact on raising the achievement of lower-attaining pupils.
- In the primary schools visited, standards in writing were considerably lower than in reading. Teachers who were confident as writers themselves, and who could demonstrate how writing is composed, taught it effectively.
- The curriculum for English was good or outstanding in just over three quarters of the primary schools visited and just under two thirds of the secondary schools. GCSE courses were generally more successful than the Key Stage 3 curriculum in motivating students.
- The quality of leadership and management in English was good or outstanding in around three quarters of the schools visited, with clear leadership from headteachers and a strong vision from subject leaders. Good leadership alone, however, was not always enough to ensure immediate improvements if there were other weaknesses, such as inconsistent teaching, or a high turnover of staff and recruitment difficulties in secondary schools. Too many subject improvement plans were weak.
- The previous English report expressed concerns about pupils' independence as learners. These concerns remain. The most effective schools used speaking and listening activities successfully to help pupils to think for themselves. Too few schools, however, planned systematically for these, although primary schools had improved their work in this area. Promoting wider reading and using homework were weaknesses.

- At present, the main focus of school improvement is on helping the lowest performing institutions. There are too few effective systems to identify and share good practice.

## Recommendations

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) should:

- consider ways in which good practice can be identified and disseminated more effectively
- implement strategies to ensure that the most challenging schools are able to recruit and retain effective teachers in English
- establish national programmes to increase teachers' own confidence as writers so that they can provide better models for pupils and raise standards in this area
- identify ways in which the teaching of writing might be improved, building on the recent publication *Getting going*<sup>2</sup>
- improve teachers' understanding of how to use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively in English, promote wider reading, and develop pupils' appreciation of the nature of spoken language
- publicise what successful schools have done that has led to higher standards in English, especially for underachieving groups.

Schools should:

- review their curriculum for English in the light of recent changes, including developments in ICT, to ensure that it meets the needs of all their pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3
- develop strategies to improve the quality and consistency of teaching that is no better than satisfactory
- build systematic opportunities for independent learning into the English curriculum and improve the quality of homework
- ensure that curricular targets and consistently good marking help pupils to understand more clearly how to improve their work
- improve the quality of subject plans in English.

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<sup>2</sup> *Getting going: generating, shaping and developing ideas in writing*, DCSF, 2008; <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00283-2008&>.

## Part A: English in primary and secondary schools

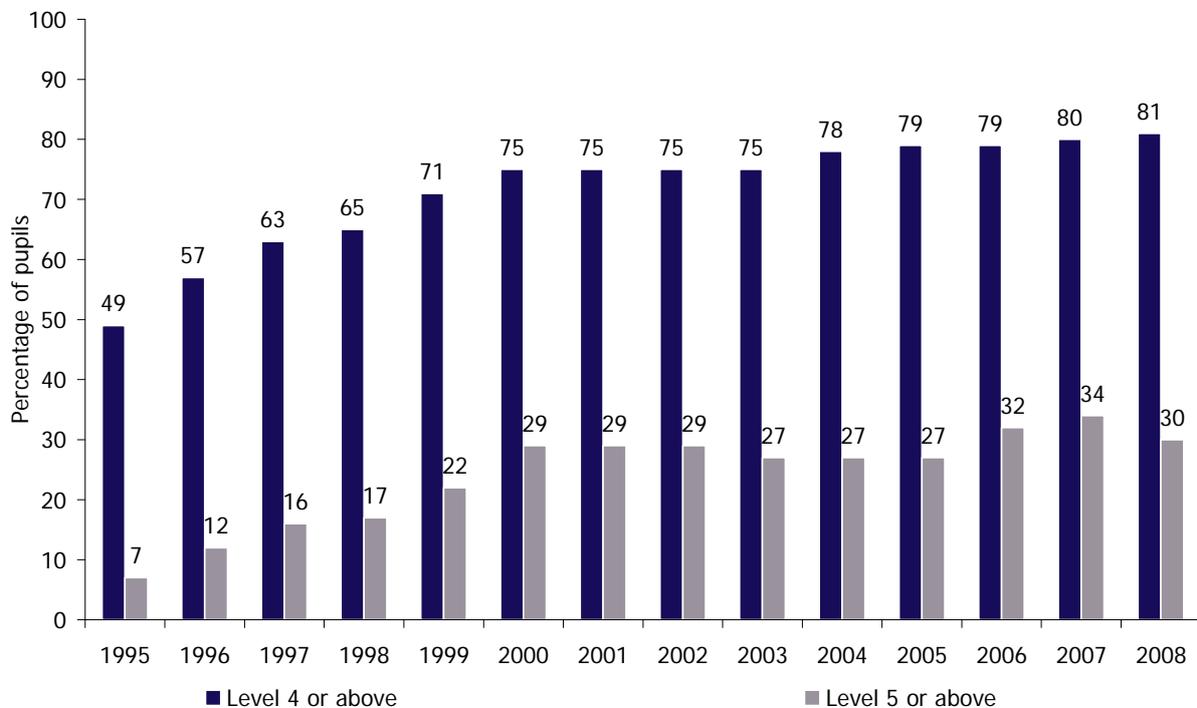
### Standards and achievement in English

1. In 2008, teachers' assessments within the Foundation Stage showed that 79% of children were secure in using language for communication and thinking.<sup>3</sup> Around 70% achieved the expected standards in aspects of reading but only 61% did so in writing. The score for writing was the lowest of all the assessment areas in the Foundation Stage Profile. Girls achieved at a higher level than boys throughout the profile, with the largest gap being in writing. This gap between girls' and boys' performance persists at later stages.
2. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that standards have failed to improve in recent years and, since 2004, there has been a slight decline in both reading and writing. In 2008, 84% of pupils achieved the standard expected for their age in reading and 80% did so in writing. Girls gained better results than boys, particularly in writing. These results show that too many pupils continue to enter Key Stage 2 with poorly developed skills in reading and writing.
3. At the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above, the standard expected for their age, has risen very slowly over the last four years (Figure 1). In 2008, the figure stood at 81%, that is, four percentage points below the target of 85% set by the Government for 2006.

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<sup>3</sup> The survey took place before the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage in September 2008.

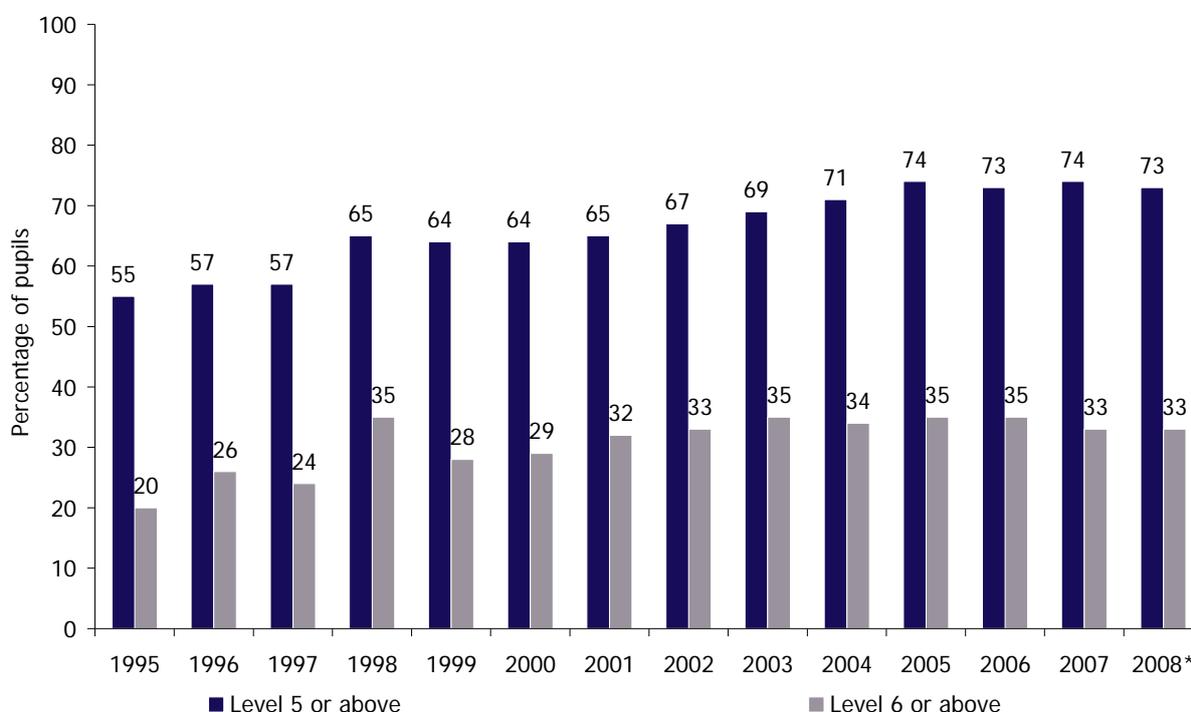
**Figure 1: Percentage of 11-year-old pupils achieving Level 4 or Level 5 and above in Key Stage 2 English tests, 1995–2008**



Source: DCSF: National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England 2007/08 (Revised), SFR06/2009

4. In 2008, there was a gap of 19 percentage points between the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in reading (87%) and those who achieved the same in writing (68%). Of the pupils who achieved Level 5, 49% did so in reading and 20% in writing, a gap of 29 percentage points. Boys' attainment has improved more than girls' in recent years. In 2008, although the gender gap closed to nine percentage points at Level 4 in English overall, it remained greater in writing than in reading.
5. Figure 2 shows that standards at Key Stage 3 have risen only very slightly over the last four years. In 2008, 73% of pupils achieved Level 5 or above, the standard expected for their age. This is considerably lower than the Government's target of 85%. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 or above has not improved since 2002.

**Figure 2: Percentage of 14-year-old pupils achieving Level 5 or Level 6 and above in Key Stage 3 English tests, 1995–2008**

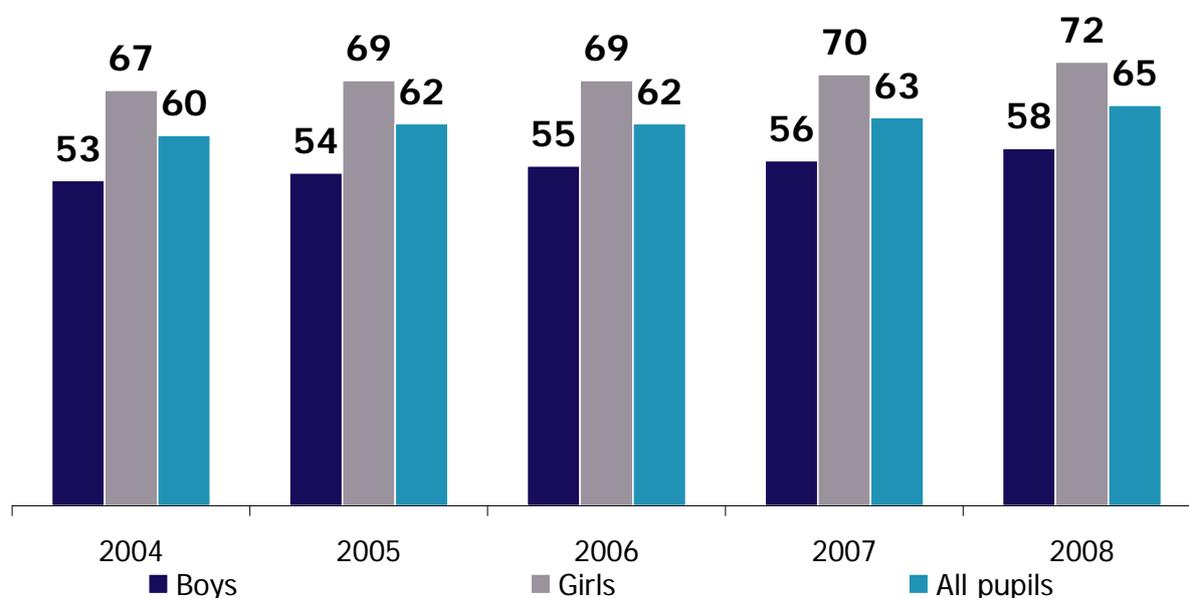


\* Figures for 2008 are provisional.

Source: DCSF: National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 3 in England, 2008 (Provisional), SFR20/2008

6. In 2008, 77% of pupils achieved Level 5 or above in writing, but only 69% did so in reading. (This is discussed further in Part B of this report.) Writing results were better than in 2007 but reading results declined. In both reading and writing, the gap between girls' and boys' performance increased to 14 percentage points.
7. Standards in GCSE English have improved slowly, from 60% of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in 2004 to 65% in 2008. Standards have also risen in GCSE English literature, with 70% of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in 2008, compared to 64% in 2004. Girls outperformed boys by 14 percentage points in English and 12 points in English literature.

**Figure 3: Percentage of pupils who achieved A\* to C grades in GCSE English at the end of Key Stage 4 in schools (percentage of pupils attempting the subject), 2004–08**



Figures for 2004 are based on the percentage of 15-year-old pupils.

Source: DCSF: GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2007/08 (Revised), SFR02/2009

8. In 2008, 94% of Year 11 pupils nationally were entered for English at GCSE level or the equivalent. The proportion entered for English literature fell slightly but still constituted 78% of the year group. More pupils were entered for GCSE drama and media courses than in 2004. In many of the schools surveyed, these courses were taught partly or wholly by English teachers. In 2008, 73% of pupils achieved grades A\* to C in drama and 63% did so in media courses.
9. A-level students perform well in English. In 2008, 99% of candidates in schools and colleges gained grades A to E. The performance of boys and girls was very similar, although only 31% of the examination candidates were boys. The proportion of students achieving a grade A or B rose from 44% in 2004 to 49% in 2008. The number entered for English at A level remains constant and it is substantially the most popular choice for girls. Media and drama courses continue to grow in popularity.
10. Some minority ethnic groups,<sup>4</sup> such as pupils of Chinese and Indian heritage, consistently achieve above the national average across the different key stages.

<sup>4</sup> Census 2001 ethnic categories.

All the minority ethnic groups within the Black category and pupils of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage consistently perform below the national average.<sup>5</sup>

11. Between 2004 and 2008, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above at the end of Key Stage 2 rose by three percentage points. Amongst pupils of Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean heritage, performance rose by six percentage points and amongst pupils of Bangladeshi heritage by seven percentage points. Between 2004 and 2007, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above at the end of Key Stage 3 rose by three percentage points. For Black African, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi pupils, this proportion improved by seven percentage points and for Pakistani pupils it rose by eight percentage points.
12. Little progress has been made in closing the gap between the performance of pupils who live in the most deprived areas of the country and those who live in the most affluent areas. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals perform considerably less well than those who are not eligible. White British boys eligible for free school meals perform particularly poorly.<sup>6</sup> In 2008, 61% achieved Level 2 or above in reading and 53% in writing at Key Stage 1; 57% achieved Level 4 or above at Key Stage 2. In 2007 only 40% achieved Level 5 or above at Key Stage 3.
13. In summary, standards in English are higher for pupils at ages 11 and 16 than in 2004 but the rates of improvement have slowed in recent years compared with previous years (see earlier figures).<sup>7</sup> Concerns remain about standards in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 and the gap between girls' and boys' performance. There are also substantial gaps between the performances of different groups of pupils. This report explores some of these issues. It also shows where good practice has made a difference to pupils' achievement, whatever their starting points, as in the school described below.

In a community language college serving areas of high socio-economic deprivation, one third of the students are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all are from minority ethnic groups and 35% speak English as an additional language. Many of them are the children of refugees or asylum seekers, and a high number of them join or leave the school during the year. Many of those who enter with low standards of literacy, or at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, make excellent

<sup>5</sup> *Attainment by pupil characteristics in England 2007/08*, DCSF, SFR32/2008; <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000759/index.shtml>.

<sup>6</sup> *White boys from low income backgrounds: good practice in schools* (070220), Ofsted, 2008; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070220>.

<sup>7</sup> *English 2000–05* (HMI 2351), Ofsted, 2005; [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/English-2000-05-a-review-of-inspection-evidence/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/English-2000-05-a-review-of-inspection-evidence/(language)/eng-GB).

progress. Ofsted had judged the school to require special measures but it is now outstanding.

The English department's self-evaluation shows that teachers have high expectations of all students. If the achievement of any group is not good enough, the reasons are investigated. Records of meetings capture lively debates on how to tackle pockets of under-attainment. Plans for improvement are thoroughly implemented and teachers have a clear rationale for any innovations. They are open to new ideas and receive good support in making bold changes to raise standards. These include teaching older students in three-hour sessions; teaching years 8 and 9 in 'stage not age' groupings; and entering students early for tests and examinations. They have committed time to developing a Year 7 programme linking English and citizenship, in order to build skills such as teamwork, research and presentation through experiential learning.

The members of the English team are reflective and self-critical. They keep innovations under close review and use the findings from formal assessments and feedback from students to bring about improvement. As well as observing lessons and looking at samples of work, the subject leader marks the key assessments across all classes. She knows individuals' strengths and weaknesses well and reviews groupings regularly to ensure that students and teachers are matched appropriately. Many of the team are external examiners and their detailed understanding of assessment criteria informs the department's teaching. The team includes a well-established higher level teaching assistant who is able to cover lessons and release staff, so that they can observe each other and work on improving their skills. This has contributed to consistency and the high speed at which changes have been implemented

The students are very positive about English. In talking to the inspector, Year 11 students immediately named it as their favourite subject. In particular, they spoke of the high energy, humour, respect and effective management of learning in English lessons. As some older students said, 'There are jokes and there is discipline'. They trust their teachers and are prepared to take risks because 'discussions are free but respectful. We can share personal issues because we know we are special to the teachers'.

Observations of lessons confirmed that the teachers were enthusiastic and passionate about the subject and that the students were right to describe the lessons as 'fun'. A wide range of exciting approaches included ICT, visual and aural stimuli, and moving images. A poetry lesson typified this, using a range of media to stimulate imagination. This enhanced the study of a complex poem that was used well as a model for the students' own writing. It was particularly suited to a class where English was not most students' first language.

## Teaching and learning

### The overall picture

14. There was no substantial difference between the quality of teaching seen in the primary and secondary schools during the survey. Around seven in 10 lessons were good or outstanding, with most of the rest being satisfactory.<sup>8</sup>
15. Where teaching was good, the teachers knew the subject well, were highly enthusiastic and established strong relationships with pupils. Practical or creative activities engaged pupils' interest; they worked effectively in pairs and groups, which involved them in discussing ideas, and helped them to think for themselves. The teachers provided encouragement and practical guidance on areas for improvement and often gave additional individual support outside lessons. Because good relationships had been established, teachers were confident to take risks in their teaching. Unusual approaches elicited very positive responses, especially from higher attaining pupils.
16. Weaker lessons often followed a formula, usually because teachers were using plans written by others, without adapting them to meet pupils' particular needs, what they already knew or the intended learning outcome. Inspectors saw lessons where low-attaining pupils spent too much time copying learning objectives into books. The level of challenge was also sometimes too low, as in lessons observed where lower-attaining pupils were asked to draw a pirate and write five words to describe him, or to collect images of war by cutting pictures from magazines. Such undemanding activities may be one of the reasons why boys (who make up the majority of pupils in lower sets) achieve less well than girls.
17. In the more challenging secondary schools visited, the problem of recruiting and retaining good teachers was one of the barriers to progress. Where English was judged to be no better than satisfactory, inspectors considered that the negative impact of major staffing changes was a key contributory feature. These schools, often in deprived urban areas, had found it difficult to attract suitable teachers, even to posts of responsibility. In one school, only the head of department had more than two years' experience. Inconsistent teaching resulting from such instability was one of the main reasons for the slow progress students made. This supports the findings of a recent DCSF report

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<sup>8</sup> This partly reflects the sample of schools visited. It excluded schools that had been placed in special measures or had been given a notice to improve. In addition, although inspectors tried to select for themselves the lessons to be observed, this was not always possible.

which showed that the least well-qualified teachers are likely to be found in the more difficult schools.<sup>9</sup>

### The features of outstanding teaching

18. Although the outstanding lessons observed were often very different, they shared several common features. Their aims were clear and the pupils understood them. Imaginative activities and varied approaches engaged and maintained pupils' interest. Most importantly, all the pupils were actively involved: discussing, trying out ideas, working with others and learning. The following examples, from key stages 1 to 4, show some or all of these characteristics.

A mixed class of Year 1 and 2 pupils had been reading *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins. The teacher wanted to develop their understanding of story characters and settings. She told them that she wanted to behave 'like a fox' and asked them how she should do this. This prompted precise use of descriptive language ('silently', 'creepily') which the teacher developed through asking for further explanations. This initial activity, with the teacher in role, was lively enough to interest all the pupils and stimulate further work. Her encouragement of imaginative language supported the later writing and play.

The teacher planned a range of activities which took full account of the pupils' ages, different starting points and what they had already learned. Younger and lower-attaining pupils used models and play to re-enact Rosie's journey. Two Year 1 pupils with learning difficulties needed support to enable them to work in a group with other pupils. Many of the other Year 1 pupils were provided with specific guidelines and frameworks to help them with their writing. Other pupils read a play about a fox, working well together to choose the parts and to organise the activity. Four Year 2 boys who were good readers needed challenging tasks to ensure they continued to make progress. These higher-attaining pupils worked independently, writing their own stories about a fox.

This detailed planning and the well-chosen tasks helped all pupils to make good progress. They were able to work well together and independently without constant support. Some tasks were essentially practical, others encouraged independent work but all were well matched to the range of ability.

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<sup>9</sup> *Secondary school curriculum and staffing survey 2007*, DCSF, 2008; <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RR026&>. This found, for example, that 94% of teachers in grammar schools had relevant post-A level qualifications in English, compared with 78% in 11–16 comprehensive schools and 66% in secondary modern schools.

19. The next example comes from a Year 6 class where boys outnumbered girls. The unit of work focused on writing for newspapers. The learning objectives included how to use an aide-memoire to support writing.

The task was to create a children's television news report. The pupils had already watched and evaluated some programmes. The teacher talked about the ways in which journalists might try to record evidence and introduced the idea of an aide-memoire. To support some of the less confident writers, she suggested that some pupils might prefer to record their observations visually, supporting their writing with pictures. Many of them took up this suggestion, sketching simple drawings to support key words or phrases, while some of the higher-attaining pupils wrote clear and well-organised notes. They were then asked to compose, in pairs, questions to put to one of the witnesses in the incident: 'Whose fault was it? Are you sure that this is what you saw? What happened after the policeman arrived?' The lesson ended with selected pupils, in role, answering questions asked by the rest of the class.

This lesson worked well, partly because television had motivated the pupils, including the boys. They had enjoyed watching and analysing the news reports and could see how the literacy skills they were developing related to the world beyond school. They developed their understanding of a different genre and had practical help with recording ideas through visual prompts and a structured approach. The context was clear and the pupils enjoyed pretending to be journalists, finding out the 'truth' about the incident described. Their later work showed that the lesson had been particularly successful in helping them to write some very good extended narratives.

The boys, especially, enjoyed the humour in the teacher's use of anecdote. All the pupils were fully engaged in the discussions and role play and looked forward to later work on making and recording their own news programme.

20. In the following lesson, from Key Stage 3, Year 9 students explored the use of different camera shots to create effects in film.

The lesson started at a good pace, with the teacher using the interactive whiteboard to show a variety of images from a number of contemporary films to remind the students what they already knew about different camera shots. Their enthusiastic comments clearly showed how much they were enjoying the work and the depth of their understanding of quite complex cinematic devices. The teacher then introduced some new concepts, related to depth of focus and lens type. The students watched the opening five minutes of a film, taking notes and commenting on the effects used. Many of them knew the film well and were able to talk about similar effects in other contemporary horror films. The whole class,

especially the boys, took a lively interest in the lesson. During the inspector's 30-minute observation, over two thirds of them contributed to discussions, drawing on many other films that they had watched outside school. For homework, they were asked to apply what they had learned to a film of their own choice.

The success of this lesson was based on the depth of the teacher's knowledge about films and his enthusiasm for sharing this with the students. The objective was clear and the lesson led to observable gains in learning. The teacher managed the discussion well, involving a large number of students and challenging them to explain and extend their ideas. The resources were well chosen, up to date and engaging. This was a lesson that built effectively on students' existing knowledge and cultural interests and gave them well-planned opportunities to extend their understanding through interesting, independent work at home.

21. The final example, from Key Stage 4, involves Year 10 students who were comparing poems for their GCSE course.

The aim was for the students to develop a personal, emotional response to poetry and to provide textual evidence to support it. The three poems were 'Education for Leisure' by Carol Ann Duffy, 'Hitcher' by Simon Armitage and 'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning, all of which presented characters who had committed a crime. The teacher posed a problem: 'You are a prison psychologist and, because of pressure on the prison system, you need to release a prisoner.' The task was to argue for the release of one of the characters described in the poems.

Varied approaches to each poem captured the students' interest. For the first one, the teacher used drama effectively, dimming the lights as she went into role, bringing the poem to life skilfully, and using the interactive whiteboard so that the classroom resembled a prison cell. The students were asked to question her in role. They responded enthusiastically, posing searching questions and noting her responses. A high quality video clip introduced the second poem, followed by discussion in pairs. The students read the third poem on their own, before working together, first in small and then larger groups, to present their case and justify their choice. At the end of the lesson, they explained their views to the rest of the class, making excellent use of evidence and articulating their arguments confidently.

This was an outstanding lesson. Imaginative teaching strategies motivated the students and engaged them with potentially difficult texts from classic and contemporary literature. Collaborative learning and the work in pairs and groups generated a great deal of productive talk, through which the students justified their views. The lesson's good pace and effective time

management meant that the students made very good progress, both in understanding the poems' themes and in using spoken language.

### Improving satisfactory lessons

22. Satisfactory lessons had sufficient strengths to allow pupils to make adequate progress but there was much scope for improvement, particularly in raising the standards of low-achieving pupils.
23. All the teachers observed in the survey used learning objectives in their planning. The best examples provided a clear purpose for the lesson, determined the teacher's choice of activities and helped pupils to review their progress. The learning objective 'to consider the advantages and disadvantages of using a first person narrator' was particularly effective in providing direction in one Year 9 lesson observed and in enabling pupils to evaluate their own understanding effectively. However, weaknesses in the use of learning objectives, in primary and secondary schools, included:
- identifying too many learning objectives for a single lesson
  - vagueness in learning objectives (for example, 'introduce comparison skills', 'the story of *Beowulf*')
  - learning objectives that described tasks rather than learning and which therefore did not enable pupils to review their own learning (for example, 'study a new poem', 'write an article for a magazine', 'write a collection of tales')
  - a mismatch between the activities teachers chose and the learning identified in plans.
24. The lack of clarity in the aims and purposes of the following weakened a lesson that, otherwise, had positive features.

The aim was for the Year 5 pupils to explore, through writing, the feelings of a character in the story they were reading. Through discussion, they produced a list of words describing feelings, which they could use to support their writing. The teacher worked with one group of pupils while the teaching assistant helped the lower-attaining pupils with the task of illustrating the book.

Progress was slow and the pupils' level of engagement dropped. During the plenary session, the teacher asked them to read their work but she made no attempt to help them analyse what they had written. One boy had used some of the prompt words as a starting point to provide a clear list of the character's feelings but the teacher told him that what she actually wanted was 'a full flowing paragraph'. She was much more enthusiastic about a second pupil's writing which, although more polished than the previous one, did not describe the character's feelings so well.

25. This was typical of many of the satisfactory lessons observed. Superficially, everything went well. The pupils were well behaved, keen to do their best and most concentrated throughout the lesson. However, their writing was at times disappointing and their progress was not as good as it should have been, largely because the teacher was not clear enough about what she wanted. The vague instruction to 'write down your feelings at the end of the story' confused pupils. Was the intention to explore characterisation in the novel or to write in a particular form? In order to improve the writing, the teacher needed to demonstrate what she wanted by writing with or for the pupils. The resulting writing lacked precision and the pupils missed an opportunity to engage with the novel more deeply. The small group of lower-attaining pupils were capable of achieving far more, especially with the support of a teaching assistant, and the task did not challenge them sufficiently.
26. Too many of the satisfactory lessons, particularly in secondary schools, started too slowly to set a good pace for learning. Too many teachers had abandoned the use of a starter activity to focus pupils' attention, so that, at the beginning of some lessons, pupils did no more than wait aimlessly for others to arrive. Even when teachers used starter activities, the level of challenge was low or the teacher failed to connect the activity with the rest of the lesson or pupils' prior learning. In one of the schools visited, for example, most of the starter activities involved word searches. These kept the pupils quiet but taught them little, since there was no discussion of the meanings of the words, their spelling, or any possible links between them.
27. A further common weakness of lessons that were broadly satisfactory, especially in secondary schools, was that they were too dominated by teachers, leading to passive responses from pupils, with too few opportunities for independent work.
28. The tasks that pupils were asked to undertake often explained why lessons were no better than satisfactory.

Year 11 students in the lowest English set were working on one of the prescribed plays for the GCSE examination. The learning objectives were clear and related to using stage directions to convey character. However, the task itself, to identify key words in the stage directions, was insufficient to motivate some of the more reluctant students. They soon found the few passages of description and some completed the task more quickly than the teacher had expected. The second activity was to use the thesaurus to find alternative words to describe the characters. This activity would have worked well in a different context. However, in this lesson it did not contribute clearly enough to the teacher's stated aims. As a result, some of the students failed to understand the purpose of the task or how it would contribute to their understanding of the play. Progress was judged to be satisfactory overall but the broadly passive teaching

approaches in this lesson meant that not all students enjoyed their learning.

29. In the no better than satisfactory lessons, teaching assistants tended to take little part early on, when the teacher read a text or demonstrated some features of writing, becoming involved only when the pupils moved into groups. In the good lessons, teaching assistants took part from the beginning of the lesson, either contributing directly to the teaching or observing, assessing and supporting individuals.

## The curriculum in English

### The changing English curriculum

30. The curriculum for English was good or outstanding in three quarters of the primary schools and two thirds of the secondary schools visited. Although it is based on the statutory National Curriculum, it has been greatly influenced in recent years by the National Strategies and significant changes are currently taking place.
31. The National Strategies have recently revised the frameworks and guidance that teachers use for planning. There have been changes to the National Curriculum in Key Stage 3, including an end to national tests at 14, and GCSE courses are being rewritten to include a new element of functional skills. New A-level courses began in 2008. At the same time, schools are being encouraged to personalise the curriculum, in order to meet pupils' needs more effectively.<sup>10</sup> The best schools visited during the last year of the survey were revising their programmes in the light of national recommendations and this was leading to positive developments. Where the curriculum was least effective, the teachers had found it difficult to respond creatively to the new opportunities. They were implementing national policy changes unthinkingly, often because they had no deeply held views about the nature of English as a subject and how it might be taught.
32. The most successful primary schools visited were taking the opportunity to enliven the curriculum and to engage pupils, particularly boys, more effectively. They were increasing the emphasis on direct experience, such as visits, as a stimulus for writing or talking. Others were basing their work on topics that were of immediate appeal to pupils and extending the links between English and other subjects. This often made the lessons more purposeful, since the pupils could see how they could apply their literacy skills to specific contexts, such as using persuasive language to express views about local environmental issues. These schools were also using visits, visitors, visual stimuli and discussion more effectively. An inspector wrote of one primary school:

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<sup>10</sup> For further information on the most recent developments in the curriculum, see: [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk).

Nearly all the pupils are of Pakistani origin. Most speak English as an additional language. Standards on entry are significantly below average. Pupils make good progress and recent test results at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average. Few pupils achieve the higher levels, either at the end of Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. Interestingly, results in English are significantly better than in mathematics or science and, at the end of Key Stage 1, standards in writing are better than in reading.

Staff are pleased about the recent improvements in English but feel that the current curriculum fails to engage all pupils sufficiently. In particular, they need to improve standards and attitudes in reading. They are conducting a significant review of the curriculum to place creativity at its centre. This is a very systematic, effective process, drawing on research, the support of an education consultant and collaborative work with two other local schools. The approach is carefully considered, well planned and firmly based on fundamental principles, especially the need to provide a curriculum that will meet the pupils' particular interests and needs. It focuses on using topics and investigations that begin with their initial questions. A further aim is to clarify links between subjects, and to provide more meaningful contexts in which pupils can develop and apply their literacy skills.

The school has used increasing flexibility in the curriculum to provide more time for reading and to introduce a consistent approach to group and independent reading, supported by a wide range of new texts. It has worked to improve the school library, which is managed by a non-specialist librarian for four days a week, and has established a library in the nursery for pupils and their parents. English lessons now include far more planned opportunities for pupils to speak, listen and discuss the texts that they have been reading. This is especially important for pupils who are learning English as a second language. The teachers also find as many activities as possible to link with the pupils' first-hand experiences, including visits by poets and other writers.

These developments are having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. The Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically and well about their reading and also about the drama activities, including performances of Shakespeare, in which they had been involved.

33. The following also provides a typical example of how primary schools are taking advantage of greater flexibility in organising their curriculum.

The headteacher encouraged the staff to plan more creatively under thematic headings. Within each theme, there was at least one activity day, such as the 'Victorian school' day, that combined history and literacy. The teachers were asked to link subjects where appropriate, while keeping the main focus on literacy. They were very enthusiastic about this because it

enabled them to match activities more closely to pupils' needs. They were also able to extend lessons to allow pupils to finish a task or follow up something which had captured their interest. The teachers often used a whole morning session, and sometimes a whole day, for a particular activity – something that they had not felt confident enough to do in the past.

34. During the final year of the survey, inspectors visited a small number of secondary schools that were also trying to use curriculum time more imaginatively, particularly in Key Stage 3. It was too early to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on standards but teachers reported that pupils' attitudes and motivation had already improved. The revised curriculum gave staff the opportunity to work more creatively, capitalise on their individual strengths, pursue topics in depth, and draw on outside help where necessary.
35. The most effective secondary schools were working to personalise the curriculum by matching it more closely to students' needs.<sup>11</sup> Examples included:
- varying groupings so that individuals received the most appropriate support for each activity
  - using integrated courses or a focus on generic learning skills to increase students' motivation
  - entering higher-attaining students early for Key Stage 3 tests or GCSE examinations
  - providing adult literacy courses for older, lower-attaining students that suited their needs better than GCSE.

A few of the schools visited had introduced programmes for more vulnerable students to ease their transition from primary to secondary school.

36. Despite some promising developments at Key Stage 3, students generally responded better to the pace and challenge of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, with its explicit framework, clear assessment criteria and detailed feedback on their performance. Many older students complained that the Key Stage 3 curriculum had not been sufficiently challenging or stimulating and that work in Year 7 often repeated what they had learned in primary school. Too many secondary teachers did not know what their students had learned at primary school and were not able to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding.
37. Although Year 10 students were normally given an outline of the GCSE course at the beginning of the year, those in Year 7 were much less clear about the Key Stage 3 programme. All the English departments visited had schemes of work for Key Stage 3 but, since they rarely showed them to the students,

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<sup>11</sup> For further information on personalising learning, see: [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk).

students could not see how individual elements linked together and supported each other. To many students, the Key Stage 3 programme seemed a random sequence of activities, such as the reading of a class novel, followed by work on persuasive writing, extracts from Shakespeare's plays and the study of newspapers.

38. In the less effective schools, the Key Stage 3 curriculum placed too little emphasis on poetry, media, speaking and listening or drama, and did not enable students to make sufficient progress in these areas. In particular, the Year 9 curriculum focused heavily on preparing for the national tests: one student complained to inspectors that the work on Shakespeare 'went on forever'.
39. The most effective departments explained the aims and purposes of the Key Stage 3 curriculum to their students and how skills were being developed and extended across different units of work. They listened to students and built the curriculum around work that might have a broad and direct appeal and lead to clear outcomes. Examples included:
  - a story that had been 'commissioned' by Key Stage 1 pupils in a local primary school
  - a film for Year 6 pupils about life in the secondary school
  - a drama production for other pupils in the same year, showcasing scenes from Shakespeare.

Of the activities inspectors saw, these were the ones that especially motivated students, helped them to develop their skills in real contexts, provided a clear reason and audience for their work, and made learning relevant.

The most successful schools were using the revisions to the Key Stage 3 curriculum to provide broader, more flexible programmes in which students were able to explore areas of particular interest, independently and in detail. One school, for example, set aside the timetable to provide time to produce a book for primary pupils and to prepare a film trailer. Another had developed its schemes to include topical and controversial issues, linked to citizenship, to stimulate pupils' interest, especially in writing. A third had carefully mapped topics in media studies and ICT across the curriculum, so that pupils had plentiful opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge to practical work.

## Reading and writing

40. Significant changes are currently affecting the teaching of reading in primary schools. These have been prompted by the publication of the report of the Rose

Review, which highlighted the need to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in phonics through a systematic and multi-sensory approach.<sup>12</sup> A survey conducted by Ofsted in 2008 showed that the report was having a major impact on practice in the schools visited.<sup>13</sup> Those with long-established phonics programmes had reviewed and improved their provision, particularly in terms of increasing the frequency and pace of their phonics sessions. Others were working hard to implement the recommendations rigorously. Children were enjoying their regular phonics lessons and gaining satisfaction from putting their learning into practice in their reading and writing.

41. The current survey found that schools, especially in the primary phase, devoted a considerable amount of time to reading. However, few had developed a clearly articulated policy, based on a detailed understanding of how pupils become readers. They used many initiatives and strategies but often in a fragmentary way. For example, group 'guided reading' was taught as a discrete activity, separated from the pupils' overall reading experience. Therefore, although there was a great deal of activity related to reading, it was not always integrated effectively or directed sufficiently at producing enthusiastic, independent readers.
42. Ofsted's previous report on English found that 'many pupils are reading less widely for pleasure than previously'. This was supported by the findings of an international reading survey which showed that enjoyment amongst pupils in England was poor when compared with many other countries, and had declined since 2001.<sup>14</sup>
43. In the current survey, inspectors noted some improvements in provision for wider reading in good primary schools. Compared to 2005, increasing numbers of teachers were reading and discussing good quality, whole texts with pupils and providing time for independent reading. More schools were using guided reading as a way of developing close reading skills, with texts matched to pupils' abilities.

The headteacher of a school in an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage spoke passionately about the importance of raising the status of reading in the community. To do this, the school extended its resources, improved the library and introduced a more effective reading scheme. At the centre of its approach was a 'reading contract' where

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<sup>12</sup> *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*, DfES, 2006; <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DFES-0201-2006&>

<sup>13</sup> *Responses to the Rose Review: schools' approaches to the systematic teaching of phonics* (080038), Ofsted, 2008; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080038>.

<sup>14</sup> L Twist et al, *Readers and reading: the National Report for England 2006* (PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), NFER, 2007; <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/other-publications/downloadable-reports/pirls-2006.cfm>.

parents agreed to listen to their children read every night. The contract included reading targets that were shared with the parents as well as the pupils. Everyone took this very seriously and the pupils got cross when it was suggested that they or their parents could fake the reading contract. Records showed that most of them had fulfilled all its requirements. As a result, standards had improved considerably and pupils' achievement in 2007 placed the school in the top 10% nationally.

44. At secondary level, the approach to independent reading remained largely unaltered since the previous English report. At best, specific plans to develop students' independent reading were confined to Year 7. Some schools persevered with 'library lessons' where the students read silently. These sessions rarely included time to discuss or promote books and other written material and therefore did not help to develop a reading community within the school.
45. There were exceptions, such as the very good practice seen in a girls' comprehensive school.

Students continue to have reading and library lessons until Year 10, in which teachers as well as pupils talk about their reading. There is as much emphasis on discussion as on silent reading. These activities are supported by a range of further initiatives:

- A teacher runs a Year 7 reading club after school for over 30 pupils, including some of the weakest readers.
- With the support of the school librarian, many Year 10 pupils are reading the books shortlisted for the Carnegie award.
- The school promotes a cross-curricular approach to reading for pleasure. In preparation for World Book Day, all staff were photographed reading a book. Their faces were obscured by the book title and a competition was held to identify which teacher was reading which book.
- The librarian provides different activities each month to link with the National Year of Reading. April involved pupils and staff in an 'extreme reading photo competition'. A member of staff had been photographed reading a book near the Pyramids and a pupil called B— had photographed herself reading underneath a sign for 'B—'s Bookshop'.

46. The most effective schools used media texts, such as films, not only to encourage pupils to read more widely but also to develop their understanding of moving image texts. This reflected the broad view of reading in the National Curriculum, as well as the changing nature of popular culture. The following example illustrates the potential impact of such work.

The rationale for using media in the school was to build on what students already knew and enjoyed. The head of English said: 'Engagement comes first. You can get Year 11 to do well enough in exams by teaching them all the tricks but, if they don't care, they won't do really well.' Another teacher commented: 'Students are experts in reading images when they arrive. Boys don't hesitate to talk about characterisation and presentation when the context is visual imagery. They are quick to take up the language for talking about visual media and reapply it elsewhere. It transfers directly to how they then talk about poems, novels and non-fiction. We get them talking about connotation in media-based lessons and find it is a good way into talking about literature.'

From watching films together, students had started to read and to compare views more widely and with more interest. For example, watching the film *Narnia* led them to read the novels of C. S. Lewis and, from there, the work of Philip Pullman. In the sixth form, using film had given both the media and literature courses more status in students' eyes. A teacher observed: 'Media studies students now bring in clips from films to point out features. After watching *Capote*, sixth formers moved on to read *In Cold Blood*.'

47. The previous English report found evidence of improvements in teaching writing: pupils had a better understanding of the writing process and the features of different texts.
48. Test results show that, at the end of Key Stage 2, writing is considerably weaker than reading. However, pupils score more highly in the writing tasks than in the reading tasks in the Key Stage 3 tests. Evidence from inspectors suggests that weaknesses in writing continue across Key Stage 3 and that this discrepancy is most easily explained by differences in the nature of the two tests. In Year 9, a disproportionate amount of time has been devoted to the particular reading skills tested by the Shakespeare play.<sup>15</sup> Because teachers are aware that students' Key Stage 3 results in reading are weaker than in writing, they tend to concentrate on reading, particularly their understanding of set scenes from the play. This means that they devote less time to improving students' writing skills.
49. Many of the lessons seen during the survey showed there was a clear need to reinvigorate the teaching of writing. Pupils were not motivated by the writing tasks they were given and saw no real purpose to them. At key stages 2 and 3, teachers often asked pupils to write imaginary letters or postcards, an activity

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<sup>15</sup> A recent publication from the DCSF gives helpful guidance on teaching Shakespeare, taking a broader perspective than that offered by the Key Stage 3 test. See *Shakespeare for all ages and stages*, 00470, DCSF, 2008; <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00470-2008&>.

that many pupils would rarely, if ever, do outside school. In one lesson seen, the pupils talked about a poem and completed a simple comprehension test which merely repeated what they already discussed. In other instances, the writing tasks had no purpose other than to keep pupils quiet and therefore prompted little interest. This contrasted starkly with lessons where pupils were given a clear goal, such as writing for a real audience, preparing for a talk or helping to plan a film clip. Here they saw the purpose of the task, appreciated the importance of quality and worked with concentration and enthusiasm.

50. In too many lessons, teachers spent so long introducing the task, analysing a text and talking about the writing that too little time was left for the pupils to complete their own work. Another common weakness was the over-emphasis on technical matters, such as punctuation or complex sentences, at the expense of helping pupils to develop and structure their ideas.
51. Sometimes the teaching focused more on pupils' knowledge *about* writing rather than on developing their skills *in* writing. Each year, from Key Stage 2 onwards, pupils were likely to be taught the features of certain types of text, such as persuasive writing or instructions. Even when they could already easily identify a text's specific features, they repeated such work, for example, identifying rhetorical questions, the passive voice and powerful adjectives. They would have learned more from being helped and supported to write a variety of extended texts in the particular form, followed by independent work on a topic of their choice.
52. A Year 9 lesson used some potentially interesting materials about the environment which could have provided the basis for discussing the effects of the sun's rays and the need for protection. These ideas might have engaged the class; instead, the teacher asked the students to write about the persuasive devices in the text, without any time for reflection. The lower-attaining students were bored and made little progress. This was in stark contrast to the following example from a primary school, typifying the way that the best schools in the survey supported writing.

The teachers ensured that the pupils had experiences to help them formulate ideas and give a context to and content for their writing. For example, Year 3/4 pupils spent an hour on the school field, trying out hoeing, digging and bird-scaring before recounting the life of a Victorian child as a farm labourer. The teachers said that such activities helped the pupils to empathise and provide detail in their writing.

## Speaking and listening

53. Ofsted's previous report on English found that schools put too little emphasis on developing speaking and listening. Since then, the teaching of speaking and listening has improved. Supported by recent national guidance, schools are now devoting more time to oral work.<sup>16</sup>
54. In the schools visited, teachers regularly gave pupils opportunities to talk in pairs before discussing their ideas with the rest of the class. Provided there was enough time for the activity and the task was sufficiently open-ended, the discussion was often vigorous and lively. Talk was often a way of improving pupils' writing, giving them the chance to rehearse their ideas before committing them to paper. Its value can be seen in the following example, the result of a Year 7 pupil having argued ideas through before writing.

'You wrote to me to say you had a spider problem in your back garden and you and your family cannot relax out there. Well I am writing back to say that you do not need to worry over little British spiders because they cannot hurt you at all. Spiders are tiny creatures that do amazing things. Their web, that you say is in your house, has the same strength as steel. Of course you have got to understand that the spider's web can catch insects and therefore will keep your garden an insect-free zone and prevent plant damage. A spider can also spin its new web without being taught. The mother just leaves it to spin its own web and the baby wanders off to find its new home. Furthermore, spiders have their own home and live as a family. They are more afraid of you than you are of them and you need to realise how they are helping in the garden.'

55. Despite the increased focus on oral work, teachers rarely used it to help pupils improve their spoken language or to understand the differences between speech and writing. Inspectors observed lessons in which pupils talked in different ways: by collaborating on a joint project with friends; arguing a point of view; or informing a wider audience about a subject that interested them. However, there was too little analysis of their speech and how they might extend their language to talk in different ways in different contexts. The primary school described here, which had a specific action plan for developing talk, was an exception.

A role play area had been created in each classroom and the teachers were expected to integrate it into lessons each week. In a Year 5 classroom, for instance, the area had been set up as an Anderson shelter from the Second World War.

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<sup>16</sup> See [revised Primary framework for literacy and mathematics \(02011-2006BOK-EN\)](http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/47590), DfES, 2006; <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/47590> and English subject leader (secondary) development materials: *Teaching speaking and listening (00022-2007DOM-EN)*, DfES, 2007; <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/84610>.

The teachers placed considerable importance on demonstrating appropriate spoken language, with the result that there was far more focus than usual on Standard English.<sup>17</sup> The pupils were sensitive to this: one group realised that other pupils' use of words such as 'kids' and 'mates' was wholly inappropriate in the historical context they were recreating.

Senior leaders were aware of the need to combat pupils' one-word answers and, when observing lessons, looked for what they called 'rich questioning'. In order to improve the quality of classroom discussion, the school also had a policy of 'no hands up'. The teachers chose pupils to answer rather than relying on confident volunteers. This meant that far more pupils were involved in discussion and they were always alert to the possibility that the teacher might ask them to comment.

56. The following example of good practice comes from a primary school with large numbers of pupils who spoke English as an additional language.

Pupils regularly practise describing their experiences, remembering, and forming a point of view. High expectations of speaking and listening are a special feature of the teaching. Pupils respond thoughtfully to challenging questions, whether comparing their views with their learning partners, contributing to plenary discussions or coming out to the front in assembly to describe their experiences. In a Year 4 drama lesson exploring dilemmas, a boy walked through a 'conscience alley' of other pupils, each of them describing what he could do about bullying. At the end, he spoke vividly about his dilemma. Many of the class were learning English as an additional language, and their participation in both speaking and listening was striking.

57. The most effective teachers demonstrated spoken language as carefully as they demonstrated writing, using a range of registers and drawing attention to details. For example, they complimented pupils on their use of language and explained clearly to the rest of the class what had made it effective. They talked about Standard and non-Standard English, slang and dialect, and used recordings of people talking effectively to discuss sensitively the ways in which individual pupils spoke. Especially good practice was noted in A-level classrooms, where students often carried out first-hand research into the uses of language, including recording and analysing young children talking, or focusing on local dialects.

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<sup>17</sup> The term 'Standard English' refers to English which is used widely in public and professional contexts. It is not associated with geography or social groupings and should not be confused with aspects of pronunciation. Standard English can be spoken with any accent since it is defined not by its sound but by its grammar and vocabulary, although it is usually associated with what is known as 'received pronunciation'.

## Information and communication technology in English

58. The last English report identified a wide gap between the best practice and the rest in using ICT. This gap remains; indeed, some of the evidence suggests that it has widened. The most effective schools planned their ICT activities well and integrated them appropriately into units of work to develop a range of literacy skills. In primary schools, for example, pupils had opportunities to communicate electronically with authors, to research topics, compile multimedia presentations, produce newspapers, develop animations and compile a book review website. In one of the schools visited, a group of pupils produced a short film as a text for others to analyse. In another, current communication styles, video stories and websites provided starting points for work in English lessons.
59. Most teachers in the survey had an interactive whiteboard but the effectiveness with which they used it varied greatly. They tended to use it to engage pupils' attention or make presentations and rarely exploited its interactive element.<sup>18</sup> The following was an exception.

The school used interactive whiteboards extensively to illustrate concepts and to involve pupils in demonstrating or practising skills. In the Foundation Stage, pupils made marks on the electronic board just as often as they did on paper. Appropriate ICT-based activities for literacy were incorporated routinely into lessons for the younger children. A new visualiser<sup>19</sup> enabled Year 6 pupils to make a microscopically detailed critique of each other's handwriting ('the upriser on the k could be stronger...') and they were quick to suggest other ways in which the equipment could be used. The teachers used the cameras in each classroom with increasing effectiveness. For instance, one teacher filmed a role play and played it to the rest of the class, using the interactive whiteboard. Another used the equipment to display pupils' writing and to discuss ways of redrafting it.

60. The gap between schools in their understanding of the uses of new technology partly reflected the very differing views that schools held about English, the changing nature of communication and pupils' literacy needs in the 21st century. The most effective schools understood that 'ICT has fundamentally altered... how we think about reading and writing'.<sup>20</sup> As technology has

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<sup>18</sup> A recent survey by Ofsted of ICT found that, although investment in resources had improved teaching, it had still not made ICT a part of everyday learning: *The importance of ICT: information and communication technology in primary and secondary schools, 2005/2008* (070035), Ofsted, 2009; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070035>.

<sup>19</sup> A visualiser is a camera that enables teachers or pupils to display an object such as a page of text or a child's work on the interactive whiteboard or screen. This image can then be captured, annotated and saved for future use.

<sup>20</sup> *Entitlement to ICT in secondary English*, National Association for the Teaching of English, 2002.

changed, so the literacy needs of pupils change. However, this always involves adding new skills rather than simply replacing old ones, as a previous Chief Inspector suggested in a speech in 2005:

Like most people, I spend a vast amount of time each day reading a wide range of texts. Most are read from the computer screen rather than books. On a typical day I might read: letters and emails, text messages, reports, menus, train timetables, television schedules and anything on the website of Rushden and Diamonds FC... What is immediately clear from a list such as this is how much more is expected of readers than 30 years ago. The skills needed to read a novel at home are vastly different from those required to search on the internet, read and compose a text message or review a number of different reports on a handheld device such as a BlackBerry...Thirty years ago we would perhaps not have recognised the notion that we 'read' media texts such as television and film... Increasingly, texts that were exclusively verbal such as newspapers, are extending the notion of visual literacy. Many texts, including those enjoyed by children, now express meaning through both verbal and non-verbal or visual means. As technological changes multiply, therefore, each generation needs to rethink the concepts of literacy and reading.<sup>21</sup>

61. The most effective schools in the survey had a clear understanding of the impact of technological change on pupils' lives and reading choices. They sought to make English both relevant to and motivating for pupils through exploiting developments in ICT, as illustrated here.

A secondary school English department had collaborated with the BBC on a project to show Year 9 students how blogging, video conferencing and computer technology can be used effectively as aids to teaching and learning. Over two days, the students worked in teams to research and write articles of interest to a teenage audience, to be published through their own online news magazine. BBC journalists visited the school to act as mentors during this work.

The project gave the students the chance to take control of their learning, work collaboratively and develop self-confidence. They learned to carry out research, select information, write clearly for a particular audience and redraft their work. They also added their articles to a school blog which allowed them to share their ideas with friends and parents.

Through video-conferencing, they linked with a very different school, of mostly white students, to discuss issues raised in the project. The students read each other's blogs and were interested to hear the views of

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<sup>21</sup> Speech by David Bell, the then Chief Inspector, at the National Literacy Trust, on World Book Day, 2 March 2005.

others, from very different social and cultural backgrounds, about topics in the news.

This was a good example of a department that had reviewed its provision to meet the challenges of developments in communications and the changing literacy needs of its students.

62. Other schools visited during the survey were making good use of the increased flexibility which laptops brought.

The school had made a significant investment in a wireless network and a large number of laptops so that ICT resources could be available in classrooms in all subjects. The older students reported that this had transformed their learning, enabling them to work independently and to be far more active in lessons.

An English teacher said: 'The laptop trolleys have brought a whole new dimension into our lessons and have been fantastic for reluctant learners. We no longer have to fight to get in the ICT rooms.' The students now had access to the internet which they could use when making their own presentations. As a result, the lessons were livelier and more interesting. Learning was also better because regular access to laptops supported redrafting and editing.

The visual and dramatic impact of ICT had enhanced learning and increased students' access to a wider range of materials. Laptops were used constantly in the department and lessons were recorded, using screen-capture software, so that students could see them again and catch up if they had been absent. Students also had access to video recordings of teaching through the school's virtual learning environment.

### **Additional curricular support**

63. Ofsted's report on intervention programmes in a small sample of primary and secondary schools found that there was more impact in the primary schools visited than in the secondary schools. The impact was good or outstanding in eight of the 12 primary schools, but in only two of the nine secondary schools.<sup>22</sup> In the secondary schools, intervention was often too late, just before national tests, and not related sufficiently to the teaching in the students' main English or mathematics lessons.
64. In the current survey, inspectors visited a substantial number of schools where teachers worked extraordinarily hard to extend the curriculum for students who

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<sup>22</sup> *An evaluation of National Strategy intervention programmes (070256)*, Ofsted, 2009; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070256>.

were taking tests or examinations. For example, one of the secondary schools provided:

- daily catch-up sessions after school for GCSE students
- a GCSE Saturday revision club focused on the set poems
- mentoring sessions led by local university staff
- revision classes in school holidays
- residential trips aimed at helping students to prepare for national tests
- writing workshops aimed specifically at underachieving boys
- one-to-one mentoring sessions with the form tutor
- sessions of paired reading with older students, teaching assistants or adult volunteers
- online revision programmes.

65. Although this level of provision was impressive, it reflected the tendency of secondary schools to focus support on the examination years, which was too late for students who entered school with low levels of literacy. The primary schools tended to introduce additional support earlier, often at Key Stage 1. They used the programmes provided by the Primary National Strategy, as well as commercial and other schemes, and focused particularly on reading.
66. The most effective secondary schools identified the needs of their students in Year 7 and chose the approaches and materials that met those needs most directly, rather than simply using existing published programmes. They also used their knowledge of students' performance to identify those who would benefit from further help and to provide programmes carefully matched to individual needs. This additional provision linked with, and reinforced, the skills being taught in the main English lessons. Another important factor was rigorous monitoring, with programmes being modified or abandoned entirely if they did not show impact.

The department had previously offered a catch-up programme which had been taught by teaching assistants, using commercial materials. Attendance at the sessions had been poor; the work was dull and the pace of learning too slow. The approach had not been successful and had been modified.

The teacher in charge had written three units of work, built on the commercial materials but based on projects that were likely to appeal to the students. It was agreed that the work had to be fun to motivate those who had been sensitively selected to take part. The units were designed to be taught in a 10-week block by teaching assistants who had been carefully prepared. The coordinator observed the teaching assistants

working with their groups and suggested possible improvements to their approach. In the first term, students' attendance was 100% and all of them had improved in the aspects of writing which were a focus for them.

## Leadership and management

### The overall picture

67. Leadership and management were better than other areas of provision. This partly reflects the significant support and training for subject leaders from the National Strategies in recent years. The leadership of English was outstanding in around one in five of the primary and secondary schools visited. In some schools, the actions taken by new leaders had yet to improve pupils' achievement, reflecting the fact that it takes time to build a settled and effective group of teachers and to have a sustained impact on standards. Other schools had implemented changes efficiently but without having a clear rationale for them or a means of evaluating their impact.

### Outstanding leadership and management in English

68. In both the primary and secondary schools visited, outstanding leadership and management of English resulted from highly effective headteachers who understood the subject's importance and placed it at the centre of their drive for improvement. They did not completely delegate responsibility for the curriculum to other senior leaders but took a constant interest in its development, closely monitoring the impact of teaching. They provided good support for subject leaders, without interfering, as in the following typical example. This school had previously been judged to require special measures; at the time of the survey, the designation had just been removed.

Much of the impressive practice in the English department showed the impact of very good senior leadership, especially that of the headteacher. He had created a positive ethos and a clear view of the role of English. As a result, he had transformed the school into one which English teachers were very keen to join.

Standards had improved over a period of significant changes in staffing. Several teachers had left during the previous year and three newly qualified teachers were working in the department. The headteacher involved himself closely in ensuring that the school was able to make good appointments, having established close links with the local teacher training providers.

The subject leader had taken up her post only recently. Despite this, very good leadership and management were evident in detailed self-evaluation, excellent documentation for the subject and good quality action plans. She already had a good understanding of the department's strengths and

weaknesses and was well supported by the headteacher and a second senior leader who worked closely with the English team.

69. Very effective subject leadership was the other most important characteristic of outstanding provision in English. Many subject leaders were good managers but the best were also inspiring leaders. They were reflective, analytical and self-critical. They used their expertise and enthusiasm to lead and support across the school, made their presence felt and exemplified good practice in their own teaching. They were outward-looking, constantly keeping the curriculum under review and introducing new approaches where appropriate. They had a very clear vision of how the subject could make a difference to pupils' lives and articulated this vision in discussion and review. This helped to create strong and cohesive teams whose members worked well together. Clear departmental priorities matched the school's particular needs. Some secondary schools, for instance, emphasised the effective use of ICT to prepare students for the demands of a modern technological society. In the following example, the focus was on reading for pleasure and instilling a love of the literary heritage.

Literature was at the centre of the department's work in this comprehensive school. The teachers read passionately and talked constantly to each other about books. As a result, there was a continuing dialogue across the department, through formal meetings and informal discussions. The impetus came from the head of department who ensured that all the teachers appointed were keen readers. In their interviews, they were always asked about their current reading.

The head of department had attracted other effective teachers to the school because of her clear vision and the strong framework that she had established. She provided decisive leadership but her effective delegation also enabled younger teachers to contribute to important areas. She trusted them to take responsibility and use their initiative. As a result, they made good progress and quickly became ready for promotion.

The impact on students' achievement was clear. At GCSE level, 93% of the students achieved grades A\* to C in English. The subject was a popular choice at A level, where two thirds of the students gained an A grade and no one achieved less than grade C.

70. The primary and secondary schools visited used a range of measures to monitor performance in English. All of them used classroom observation systematically to evaluate teaching and learning. At best, schools made good use of specific criteria, often based on the Ofsted inspection framework, to provide detailed, evaluative feedback to teachers. This was further used to identify common strengths and weaknesses in teaching and to target appropriate training. The more effective schools also scrutinised pupils' work regularly and provided clear individual and collective feedback to staff. They

also monitored plans and schemes of work carefully; a few were beginning to use feedback from pupils effectively to improve their practice.

71. Using data effectively was another indicator of good practice in both phases. Careful tracking of individuals' progress enabled subject leaders to identify underachievement, even in high-attaining schools. The most successful schools expected all their pupils to make good progress and focused support effectively on those with difficulties.
72. A lack of sharpness in using data was a characteristic weakness. For example, a primary school, despite collecting a significant amount of information, failed to identify that boys and its most able pupils were underachieving. Some schools, especially those where attainment was high, placed too little emphasis on how much progress pupils actually made. A secondary school, for instance, judged its effectiveness in English to be outstanding. However, although standards were very high, the students were capable of doing even better. Another school had identified weaknesses in pupils' progress but did not monitor teaching and learning well enough to determine what action to take.
73. Action plans for the subject, even in the more effective primary and secondary schools, remained a weaker area. Too often, they failed to take weaknesses in performance as a starting point, tending to focus on activities without relating them to outcomes. For example, a primary school had a detailed plan for developing reading, although it was not clear what weaknesses in standards or provision it was intended to tackle. Too many plans lacked clear targets or success criteria. One primary school's plan referred to the need to secure good quality teaching across the school but without indicating how it might be evaluated. A secondary school had implemented a new approach to English in Year 7, through thematic projects, but had not considered how to evaluate students' response or to assess its impact on standards. Schools that did not monitor the quality and impact of their improvement plans were not able to tackle their weaknesses effectively or to identify and disseminate their best practice.
74. Outstanding leadership and management in the most effective schools had not only raised the profile of English and attracted good teachers but had also contributed directly to improving standards and achievement. This takes time, especially where the quality of teaching is inconsistent or the school's circumstances are very challenging.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Such schools are described in *Twelve outstanding secondary schools: excelling against the odds* (080240), Ofsted, 2009; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080240>.

75.

This larger than average primary school serves a mainly white working-class community. Levels of deprivation are higher than normal and pupils' attainment on entry is consistently below average.

Standards are steadily improving and have risen to just above the national average. The headteacher describes English as being 'the pinnacle' of pupils' learning. On appointment, her first priority was to establish the principle that literacy skills were the key to pupils' learning across all subjects. She appointed an effective subject leader and set up a strong team with representatives from the different key stages. She turned her focus to the curriculum which, at that time, 'wasn't working for our children'. The building up of literacy skills was insecure and the spoken language of many of the pupils was limited in its range. There was a need to develop reading habits and to give greater emphasis to speaking and listening. The school developed a new curriculum in English.

The staff refer to the scheme of work as the 'holy grail', an indicator of the seriousness with which the subject is being tackled. Its particular strengths are its thoroughness and its practical guidance on aspects such as managing guided reading and the range of texts. It also gives teachers flexibility to pursue their own areas of interest. The headteacher, subject leader and the rest of the team are passionate about improving standards. One teacher said the result is that 'everyone understands why they are doing something'.

The impact has been remarkable. Achievement has been consistently good recently and, in 2007, the contextual value-added data placed the school in the top 1% nationally.

76. In summary, the most effective leadership in English results from:

- the headteacher's commitment to the subject
- a clear sense of vision that provides direction
- effective teamwork
- a focus on ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils
- a good balance between giving teachers direction as well as flexibility and choice in approaching their work.

## Part B: How can standards in English be improved?

### Independent learning in English: helping pupils to think for themselves

77. The following lesson was observed in a Reception class.

The children were discussing frogs, a topic they had researched for homework. Some had used the internet and others had consulted books, often with the help of their parents. The quality of the discussion was impressive. The teacher's language provided an effective model for the children; she encouraged them to talk at length and ensured that everyone was listening. Many of the children spoke confidently and knowledgeably, showing how much they had learned from their work at home. The session was followed by group and independent activities, inside and outside. The pond proved a particularly valuable resource, enabling the children to observe frogs at first hand and to write about them. Like many of the topics, this one had been chosen by the children themselves.

Compare it with this Year 9 lesson.

The teacher had begun work on the GCSE set poems. He introduced one of the poems, talked about it at some length and explained some of its more difficult aspects. He asked the students to consider questions about it. Towards the end of the lesson, they talked about what they had discovered. The teacher expanded their ideas and guided them about what to record. In doing so, he almost took over the feedback session, so that the students gradually said less and less.

78. The Year 9 lesson was dominated by the teacher. In particular, he told them too much about the poem before they had the opportunity to explore it, come up with their own ideas and form their own impressions. In contrast, the four-year-olds in the Reception class were able to exercise choice over the topics for study, carry out meaningful research at home and work independently on a range of tasks, some of which they had selected for themselves.
79. The previous Ofsted report on English criticised schools' uniformity of approach and the undue emphasis on whole-class instruction. It recommended that schools should do more to develop pupils' initiative and independent learning. Recent national policy has also emphasised personalisation and the need for pupils to develop independence and responsibility. These features are often

present in the best practice in the early years, as shown in the following quotation:<sup>24</sup>

'Children enjoy stories and rhymes, which are often lively and interactive, and develop a love of favourite books. Children can be seen modelling storytelling and good book behaviour to one another as they use the book area to share stories and play 'schools'. Children achieve very well in this area; some enjoy making up and dramatising their own stories to a delighted audience of friends and teachers. Children like to make scrapbooks to record things they have done, using pictures and words.'

80. The challenge for schools is to build on such practice. Although acknowledging the importance of developing pupils' independent learning, too few schools in the survey were planning systematically for it or building it into their schemes of work. In general, the teachers tended to direct the lessons too much, especially when teaching writing and when preparing pupils for tests and examinations. The time provided for independent work was often too short to enable pupils to complete their writing.
81. As they got older, pupils were given fewer rather than more opportunities to work independently or to exercise choice. Preparation for GCSE examinations exacerbated this by focusing on what teachers and students described as 'spoon-feeding'. Consequently, sixth-form students often spoke about their difficulties adjusting to A-level study, where they were expected to read independently, carry out extended research, develop their own detailed initial response to texts and think for themselves.
82. One positive development since the last report has been the increasing emphasis on teachers' planning for talk and drama. Role play and problem-solving in groups encouraged pupils to use their initiative, make decisions and work with others. In the most effective secondary schools visited, students told inspectors how much they enjoyed discussion in GCSE lessons, preparing and delivering their own talks, often on topics they had chosen for themselves, and collaborating. In one of the schools visited, small groups of students discussed topics while the rest of the class observed them. These activities helped students to develop their own ideas, make decisions, take on different roles within groups, learn to accommodate others' views and evaluate each other's work. Further examples included extended projects, such as producing a school magazine or newspaper that gave pupils opportunities to work in more flexible ways.
83. When teaching writing, teachers tended to dictate both the form and context of the work, such as instructing pupils about the features of narrative writing in a

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<sup>24</sup> *Early years: getting on well* (070059), Ofsted, 2007; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070059>.

particular genre and then closely structuring the required response. They therefore missed the opportunity to encourage independence. Yet pupils, especially boys, responded more enthusiastically when they were given some choice about the topic. Several primary schools in the survey encouraged pupils to behave more as real writers by keeping personal journals and choosing what they should write about.

84. Good provision tended to be individual or occasional practice. For example, from time to time, pupils were given opportunities to carry out research. In one secondary school visited, this was a unit of work, focusing on the English literary heritage. Students were able to choose and find out about a particular writer and then present what they had learned to the rest of the class. Although the schools visited routinely exhorted pupils to read widely, only the best gave this enough curriculum time or used it to promote and monitor pupils' wider reading outside school.
85. Homework was underdeveloped as a means of promoting independent learning. In the primary schools visited, the tasks set were often limited to learning spellings or completing language exercises. In secondary schools, too much homework was confined to simple revision or completing written work begun in class. However, there were individual examples of good practice, often involving the wider school community. These included students interviewing members of their family, establishing email links with other schools or conducting research on a topic of their own choice. One secondary school had run a trial of 'home learning'. The deputy headteacher explained it as follows:

We had become concerned about the quantity and quality of homework and its usefulness. We set up a working group of interested staff to gather students' views. We looked at what sort of learners we had and what, as a school, we particularly needed to tackle. Needless to say, independent learning came out strongly. Many departments were willing to try home learning as a new approach and we came up with a programme which gave two weekly slots for each subject in Year 7 and three weekly slots in Year 8. The aim is to give students the opportunity to spend time over something which will run alongside the curriculum but not necessarily be tied to it. All the tasks go on to our intranet so that the students have access to them. In English, for example, one of the units focuses on poetry and gives students a range of activities from which they can choose, including creating, evaluating and understanding poetry. The tasks include writing a number of poems in the same style; teaching a lesson for the class on one of the chosen poems; filming an imaginary interview with the poet; and creating a quiz of 20 questions on the poems.

86. Good or outstanding provision had similar characteristics in primary and secondary schools. First, opportunities for independent learning were an integral part of schemes of work and were consistently reflected in practice. Pupils were expected to take responsibility for their own learning, work

independently in pairs and groups, and negotiate and manage activities. Self-evaluation was strongly encouraged: pupils became skilled at devising their own targets for improvement and assessing their progress. Independent reading was promoted systematically. Pupils were given increasing choice and independence in writing, with less need for structured support. Drama, oral presentations and discussion helped to develop their confidence in expressing personal views. Enrichment activities, such as competitions, subject-related clubs, and film and theatre work, also made a significant contribution, giving the pupils opportunities to write independently without guidance from and the intervention of the teacher. The following poem from a primary pupil provides a typical example of work resulting from such an approach.

87.

The moon was a medallion on the velvet sky  
 The wind tore round the trees releasing a sigh  
 A lonely bat flew up then soared  
 There was a screech of wheels  
                   as the boy came skating  
   skating  
   skating.  
 The young boy came skating  
                   to the shop  
   on his board.

### Assessment in English: building on good marking

88. This survey found examples of outstanding practice in assessment which marked a substantial improvement on what was found in the previous survey. Even so, assessment remains an area of relative weakness in primary and secondary schools. Inspectors identified it as a weakness in over a third of the schools visited in the final year of the survey.
89. Most of the pupils in the schools visited knew what National Curriculum level they were working at. The teachers were using curricular or learning targets to help them with the next steps, especially in writing. Most lessons included a plenary activity where teachers and pupils reviewed what had been learned. The best schools used a common framework for assessment and moderated the work of pupils in parallel classes to check that they were making similar

progress. These developments reflected the influence of the National Strategies' guidance on assessment.<sup>25</sup> A sixth-form college, for instance, had designed a detailed handbook and very clear feedback sheets; they included assessment criteria and precise advice on what students needed to do to improve their work.

90. Despite such developments, many pupils were still not clear about what their strengths and weaknesses were or how they might improve. A key problem was that they did not understand the targets well enough or know how to respond. The targets tended to focus on writing, often at the expense of reading, speaking or listening, and to be confined to superficial features of writing, such as punctuation. Sometimes they applied only to certain types of texts, so that they could not be transferred to other contexts. There was little consistency across schools in the way that targets were agreed, reviewed and amended. Sometimes they were set at the beginning of a term and remained unchanged, regardless of the progress a pupil made.
91. The quality of the marking was a major strength in the best schools. It was often detailed and supportive, typified by these examples.

You have worked hard on this. The first and second paragraphs are very effective but the middle one is not really relevant to the job you are applying for. Overall – accurate, thoughtful and well laid out. Think carefully about the language you're using and why and put book titles in quotation marks.

An effective story that builds tension very well. The narration/diary structure is interesting. I would vary the writing between the two forms a bit more. Perhaps write the story in the present tense while keeping the diary in the past, using it in this way to reflect what happened in the race.

92. The best marking was encouraging but also provided clear guidance and helpful targets.<sup>26</sup>

Moving empathetic narrative in which you write very powerfully from the perspective of the enslaved African plus a dramatic conclusion. You used the task very effectively to stretch yourself, sustaining a complex piece of writing over an extraordinarily big canvas. I like the ocean metaphor; it seemed appropriate, given the slave trade theme. Suggested reading:

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<sup>25</sup> A recent report from Ofsted judged that assessment for learning was satisfactory or inadequate in over half the schools surveyed. See *Assessment for learning: the impact of National Strategy support* (070244), Ofsted, 2008; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070244>.

<sup>26</sup> *Poetry in schools* (070034), Ofsted, 2007, contains further examples of good marking; [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Poetry-in-schools/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Poetry-in-schools/(language)/eng-GB).

*Underground to Canada*. Target: develop more connectives to show passage of time rather than 'and then'. For example: 'afterwards', 'suddenly', 'a moment later', 'while'.

You are very perceptive about the process of being a writer but seemed to be on shakier ground when analysing the text. Focus on why you do the things you do and what effect they have. Target: use tenses consistently. Here it should be past simple (he put, he did) not past perfect (he had said) and vary verbs for reported speech instead of 'said'. 'Barked'? 'Exclaimed'?

93. The most effective marking was based on clear policies that ensured consistency across classes. An inspector wrote of a primary school's practice:

There are some significant strengths to the marking. Outcomes are clearly identified for each piece of writing. These are closely linked to levels and prominently displayed in pupils' books. The statements are very explicit and easily understood by pupils, for example, 'I can write six descriptive sentences'; 'I can use a finger space'. All teachers use pink and blue highlighting pens consistently to identify good points in pupils' work, together with areas for development. Similarly, each set of statements is marked by the teacher to indicate success or failure. Teachers also provide very detailed comments.

94. In the best examples, pupils were closely involved in reviewing their own work and responding to feedback. Even young children could comment appropriately when the learning objectives were clear. A Year 1 pupil wrote, for instance: 'I have used commas effectively in this work.' Pupils were sometimes encouraged to reply to comments, leading to a productive dialogue.

'Thank you Mr B. I will work on the things I need to work on. Next time I will think more carefully about my ideas and give the reader more information. Also I will not use apostrophes every time a word ends in s.'

95. Pupils also commented on each other's work. When they had clear guidance on what to look for, their comments were just as apt as those of the teacher.

'You had some lovely phrases from the poem which helped to create the atmosphere. Target: I would try to make the mariner seem a bit more afraid of the dead men as he doesn't seem that surprised!' (Year 7 student)

96. Weaker marking often praised without saying what needed to be improved. Higher-attaining writers in particular received too little feedback. If the spelling and punctuation were good in a piece of writing, teachers who were not English specialists struggled to say anything meaningful about its structure, ideas or

expression and, possibly, felt that pupils could not accept criticism. In fact, where relationships with teachers were good, the pupils welcomed criticism:

‘She wrote “Boring!” but then said what to do about it. She always does. So I was able to make it more interesting next time.’ (Year 10 boy)

97. The inconsistency of marking across subject teams limited the impact of some very good individual practice. There were also too many schools where marking in other curriculum areas was not as thorough or precise as in English. This was true even in primary schools, where the same teacher marked all the work for a class. The following was an exception.

One of the most impressive aspects of marking is that this level of detail is also evident in comments on literacy in subjects other than English. One example from art reads as follows: ‘An excellent piece of art work showing you have researched your Aztec work very carefully and redesigned your ideas. It may be useful to write a short description about each artefact and explain what it is used for.’ In commenting on a history topic book, the teacher wrote: ‘You really are able to write a recount in chronological order. What you need to do now is add that extra detail, using adjectives and adverbs.’

98. The schools in the survey were beginning to be influenced by new guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the National Strategies on ‘Assessing pupils’ progress’.<sup>27</sup> This is designed to support day-to-day and periodic assessment in English for reading and writing. Further materials are currently being developed to support speaking and listening. Evidence from this survey showed that the materials have the potential to help teachers to build a profile of their pupils’ achievements, set appropriate targets and have a clearer view of their pupils’ National Curriculum levels. They also helped teachers to standardise and moderate work more accurately.
99. The most effective practice at this early stage was seen in schools that were reviewing and modifying their policies in the light of the ‘Assessing pupils’ progress’ guidance. They were beginning to track progress more systematically, using a wider range of contexts, instead of waiting for formal assessment at the end of the key stage. Less effective schools were simply adopting the assessment tasks without trying to integrate them into existing schemes of work and without paying sufficient attention to the programme’s guiding principles.

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<sup>27</sup> For further information on ‘Assessing pupils’ progress’, see: [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_16884.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_16884.aspx).

## Boys and English: how the best schools make a difference

100. The previous report on English drew attention to the gap in performance between boys and girls. It stressed that this was not confined to England alone: 'Underachievement of boys is a concern broadly paralleled throughout the English-speaking world and beyond'. The gap between girls' and boys' achievement in English is greatest in writing. However, an earlier Ofsted survey concluded that the most effective schools had shown that it was possible to close this gap and that other schools needed to learn from this.<sup>28</sup>
101. Despite a considerable amount of emphasis on motivating boys, the attainment gap has not narrowed markedly since 2004, although boys' test results in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved more than those of girls. The gap in performance at the end of Key Stage 4 has not changed. The need to identify and share good practice remains.
102. The difference in attainment between boys and girls is already evident in the early years. Early years settings and primary schools must focus on helping boys develop more positive attitudes to English, as in this primary school.

All pupils, especially boys, were enthusiastic about their regular drama lessons, taught by a part-time specialist. They were unanimous in saying that these lessons were the 'best in the school'. Another interesting feature was the enrichment activities each Friday afternoon. Initiatives such as the 'Kids' Newspaper' gave pupils opportunities to work collaboratively on an interesting project with a clear audience in mind. Other activities included a reading club, a cartoon club and sessions on sign language.

Not surprisingly, the boys achieved as well as the girls. Importantly, nothing suggested that these lively approaches were not as successful with the girls.

103. Other primary schools where boys' writing had improved used active approaches which captured their interest and prompted them to write with originality and wit.

'I am writing in response to your advert saying that you want a new knight for the Round Table. I would like to apply for this job as I think I have all the qualifications needed. I can ride noble steeds and I am very strong. I can rescue damsels in distress and I'm a fierce fighter. I'm a loyal person and always honest. I can work confidentially and I can work in teams. Defeating enemies is easy work for me. I am looking forward to

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<sup>28</sup> *Yes he can: schools where boys write well* (HMI 505), Ofsted, 2003; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/505](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/505).

receiving a reply. I hope I get this job as I am passionate about defeating evil.'

104. The previous English report identified several factors that had helped boys to improve their writing. These included:

- a school culture which valued intellectual, cultural and aesthetic accomplishment by boys as well as girls
- responses to written work which valued diversity of style and approach, succinctness as much as elaboration, and logical thought as much as expressiveness
- a good balance between support and independence, with pupils always expected to be as independent as possible
- giving pupils choice about the content of their writing, even when the form or genre were prescribed
- ensuring that writing tasks were purposeful, through using writing to support thinking, providing real audiences, and publishing and displaying writing
- giving pupils opportunities to write frequently and at length (often as homework), in this way developing their stamina as writers, but seldom requiring the rewriting of long pieces unless for 'publication'.

105. That report also recommended that local authorities and other support agencies needed to identify and share good practice. Inspectors found several examples where the recommendations had been put into practice and boys' performance had improved. The most successful schools had not simply taken the ideas that had worked elsewhere but had carefully adapted them to their own circumstances and their pupils' particular needs. The next three examples illustrate this.

In this boys' secondary school, 95% of students are from minority ethnic groups and 86% speak English as an additional language (EAL). Those of Pakistani heritage are the largest group. Attainment on entry is well below average but standards are slightly above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Progress is outstanding and in line with the top 2% of schools nationally.

Several factors account for this success. First, the school's ethos is one of high expectations. As the headteacher says, 'Social deprivation and EAL are no excuse for underachievement'. Second, the school has made considerable efforts to gauge students' views, through regular questionnaires, listening to them talking about what motivates them and working hard to create a curriculum that meets their needs. The boys tell their teachers that more practical activities, involving drama, speaking and listening and ICT, help them to learn and these approaches have been

systematically integrated into all lessons. As a result, the boys are very positive about English.

An excellent range of resources identifies the essential skills for learning, the key criteria for success and the characteristics of good writing. Together with clearly defined lesson objectives, these ensure that students know exactly what they have to do to be successful. The school takes account of the boys' preference for a logical structure to learning and an immediate return for their efforts. In response to their requests for consistent feedback, marking is very detailed, with errors being corrected in far more detail than is usually the case.

The curriculum is designed to ensure that every student follows a course that suits his ability and interests. At Key Stage 4, there is a range of options based on different pathways. Almost all students study GCSE English. Some also study English Literature. Others follow GCSE or Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses in performing or expressive arts, or the BTEC media course. Some students follow a basic skills adult literacy course and the school is piloting functional literacy tests. At both key stages, some students are entered early for tests and examinations.

The minority ethnic achievement project (MEAP) has been very successful in supporting particular groups of students. In Year 8, for example, the school asked the students to identify books that they would like to read and then worked with a local bookshop to purchase them and establish a class library. As a result, attitudes to books were transformed and the boys now read regularly.

Standards in writing have also improved. This was partly the result of research within the department which showed that students speaking English as an additional language needed to know exactly what to do and how to do it if they were to take the next step in improving their writing. The teachers produced a writing booklet which is used to support any writing activity. It includes very detailed guidance, linked to level criteria; examples of different types of writing highlight strengths and weaknesses. Subject-specific terminology is also carefully defined and explained. The parents of all the students engaged in the MEAP project have been briefed on how they can help their sons at home.

The students are encouraged to enter poetry, short story and saga competitions, organised within and outside the school. Several have been successful and the school is now compiling material for its own anthology of students' work. Crucially, the teachers recognise that boys learning English as an additional language often find creative writing difficult. Therefore, their approach to teaching creative writing is similar to that for

teaching non-fiction. They also provide activities to foster experience and feelings which the students might find difficult to imagine or discuss.

106. The following example describes a school, with a mostly white population, where several teachers were enthusiastic about using media in English and were teaching imaginative lessons which the boys found lively and relevant.

A Year 8 class watched the short cartoon *The Rat*. They jotted down notes and predictions which reflected the close attention they had paid to the visual and aural detail in the film. They then worked in groups to compare their personal perceptions of a 'happy ending' before viewing the final section. Following this, they adopted the point of view of either the man or the rat. They pored over printed stills from the film, identifying the images that best conveyed each character's perspective, and compared the two points of view. The students' independent thoughtfulness and their ability to make inferences from visual imagery were striking.

A second class of Year 10 students had studied the opening sequence of *Moulin Rouge*, watching it repeatedly, once without the sound. A group of boys agreed that 'the more you talk about it, the more there is to see next time'. Different groups took responsibility for commenting on different aspects, such as costumes, props, lighting, music or camera angles. This gave them a considerable amount of material with which to structure their first GCSE essay, and the teacher was very struck by the length of the boys' writing and the way that they had succeeded in supporting their commentaries with appropriate evidence.

107. The next example describes the very good use of popular culture to explore treatments of love and sex in classic poetry with a group of boys:

As part of the GCSE course, the class was studying Browning's 'My Last Duchess' and 'A Woman to her Lover' by Christina Walsh. The teacher wanted the class to relate to the poems' presentation of sexual attraction and love, a difficult task with an all-boys' group. She began with a lively and challenging opening, using rap music that focused on a man describing his latest lover. She asked the boys to list the key aspects of a woman that they would find attractive. Initially, the boys were reluctant to discuss physical aspects but sensitive questioning by the teacher gave them the confidence to speak more openly and without embarrassment. The music and lyrics helped. The intention was that the boys should review their list later, after reading the two poems, one of which presented a male, the other a female perspective. This led on to structured annotation of the poems. Supported by the teacher's high expectations, a clear focus on A\* grade criteria and well-organised group work, the lesson ended with boys offering mature reflections on each other's ideas about the poem.

108. The key characteristics of this lesson included very high expectations, a lively and challenging opening, a focus on high quality group work and a close emphasis on the use of language. The result was that the Year 10 boys showed high levels of interest in poems that have sometimes been considered more suitable for girls.

### How can standards of writing be improved?

109. The previous English report recorded improvements in teaching writing. In particular, pupils understood the writing process better and the features of different texts. However, a high level of public concern remains about standards of writing, especially in the light of poor results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2.<sup>29</sup> Many secondary-age students, especially boys, also find writing hard, do not enjoy it and make limited progress. The DCSF has recently published guidance to help schools improve writing.<sup>30</sup> This includes a research paper on developing the productive skills of speaking and writing, supported by examples of practical classroom strategies. The paper argues for the need to 'reinvigorate writing practice and theory to increase engagement and improve standards'. It identifies a number of ways in which this might be done, including:

- giving the teachers themselves more practice in writing
- giving pupils the opportunity to think more deeply about their writing and to talk about what they are trying to convey
- providing more effective purposes and audiences for writing.

110. One of the most positive developments over recent years has been the increasing tendency for teachers to demonstrate writing for their pupils. At its best, this involves teachers in writing with pupils, explaining their choices of words and phrases, and amending their work as they produce it. Evidence from the USA, where there is a long-established National Writing Project for teachers, suggests that pupils' work improves when their teachers regard themselves as writers.<sup>31</sup> However, many of the teachers in the survey, in primary and secondary schools, lacked the confidence to do this. As a result, their pupils were not able to see how ideas and language are created, shaped, reviewed and revised.

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<sup>29</sup> Concerns about writing are not confined to this country. The previous English report quoted evidence from the USA that '75% of twelfth graders [aged 17 to 18] were not achieving the required standard and half of all college freshmen had difficulties in writing'.

<sup>30</sup> *Getting going: generating, shaping and developing ideas in writing*, DCSF, 2008; <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00283-2008&>.

<sup>31</sup> R Andrews, *The case for a national writing project*, CfBT, 2008.

111. Children's early experiences make a vital contribution to their writing, illustrated in the following report on a pre-school day-care setting.

Exceptionally good access to a range of writing resources encourages children's early writing skills. There is a well-resourced writing and graphics area, and notepads or clipboards and pencils are available at every activity, including during outdoor play. Many children spontaneously use these to make marks, for example by trying to write their names. Resources in the role-play area also provide children with many opportunities to write, for example, diaries, address books, notebooks and envelopes. Children are learning that print carries meaning through the very good use of labelling in the pre-school environment and through access to newspapers, catalogues, leaflets, lists and menus.

112. A vibrant curriculum in an infant school helped children to make rapid progress in reading and writing.

The school served a largely white population on the edge of an urban area. Pupils' standards on entry were below average, especially in writing, although they had risen in recent years. The school worked closely with local authority consultants and with local junior and secondary schools. This had been especially helpful in enabling the teachers to share good practice. At the time of the inspector's visit, they were focusing on how to use films in their teaching.

In the Foundation Stage, the children's writing skills were developing well and most of the pupils showed real enthusiasm for writing. Their narratives showed how well talking about a series of projected still frames from a cartoon had stimulated their imaginative play, talk and writing. They had discussed, predicted and acted out what would happen next. The children then developed some pieces of lengthy and coherent writing with vivid, detailed illustrations: 'The wind bloo and bloo and bloo Spot's nose bent. The farm was a rotten mess... Farmer Pickles sent Spot to find the sheep. They saw the bent tree. The sheep ran fast out of the gate.'

In Year 2, pupils were making equally good progress with writing. On the day of the visit, they had been watching extracts from the film *ET* and, in the lesson seen, they were to compose individual poems about the main character. They warmed up for writing by performing some of their own work with gesture, pace and intonation. This heightened their sense of undertaking a special craft. They jotted ideas down as they looked intently at a short sequence showing ET leaving his friends to enter the spaceship. The teacher also wrote down ideas and gave the pupils time to reflect before discussing their ideas with each other.

This lesson had the air of a creative writing workshop, with children sometimes speaking, sometimes drafting in their notebooks, all very

absorbed in their tasks. The outcomes were equally satisfying: 'Blazing, a misty purple beam echoed round the ground... the creaky drawbridge closed, the shrinking light fading slowly... the spaceship left a magnificent rainbow which meant that ET would never forget... the rainbow sparkled as the ship faded.'

113. The National Strategies continue to support the teaching of writing<sup>32</sup> and this has prompted many schools to review and develop practice. A small, rural primary school, which had identified writing as a significant weakness, produced an ambitious action plan with the support of the local authority. It included plans for:

- an emphasis on writing for enjoyment and making better cross-curricular links
- intensive support for weaker writers
- termly monitoring of writing and more effective marking, based on written 'conversations' between the teacher and the pupil
- teaching pupils from years 5 and 6 in smaller groups
- using films, presentations by local writers and visits to a range of interesting locations as stimuli for writing.

114. A similar approach was taken by a secondary school where a teacher ran a weekly lunchtime writing class for Key Stage 3 students.

The work produced by the group was published in the monthly school newspaper, which the students edited. The teacher normally presented some kind of stimulus leading to discussion, followed by drafting of writing. The students worked on the writing at home and emailed it to her. She then promptly sent her comments back to them. This teacher shared her own writing with the students within the creative writing club. Several other teachers in the department did the same in lessons.

115. The best practice in teaching writing seen during the survey included some or all of the following features:

- choice for pupils over the topics for writing
- topics that genuinely interested pupils and that were not always based on responses to texts
- opportunities for pupils to talk about ideas and the task before beginning writing

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<sup>32</sup> Recent training materials produced by the National Strategies on writing include 'Support for Writing' and 'Talk for Writing', as well as the 'Every Child a Writer' programme.

- sufficient time for pupils to write
- interesting homework that focused on developing pupils' independent learning skills
- effective demonstration of writing by teachers
- a consistent focus on developing writing skills across the curriculum
- well-focused feedback from teachers, including thorough marking that identified clear targets for improvement.

116. The example that closes this section was written by a girl in an inner-city comprehensive school. The students had a high level of confidence in their teachers and were prepared to explore quite personal writing with them, knowing that they would receive positive and supportive feedback. Through this process, they were able to develop their initial ideas into thoughtful, coherent and sensitive work.

'A bunch of white lilies presented at my grandma's funeral. Some other vibrant flowers shaped the word 'Nan'. Each individual flower had qualities that represented her; these things were what she would be remembered by. I stood close to my mother's side and wept.

A bouquet of flowers, delivered to a lover's door secretly. Each flower, intricate and beautiful, every way you look at it. Almost as if they had been handmade. A tag had been slipped between them bearing the sender's name and a message that made her blush. They express the way these two feel about each other. In every way they see each other as perfect.

An assortment of fresh flowers handed to the bride on her wedding day. She takes them and sets them among the others that she has been given. Each flower tries to outperform the other; they flash their beauty at anyone who bothers to spare them a glance, each as vain and naive as the other. Eventually that beauty will fade. These flowers that once had been so delicate will start to droop, lose their elegance. Gradually they will wilt and wither away. Finally someone will discard them. They will cry out, but no one will hear them. They are no longer worth looking at. Another fresh bunch of flowers will take their place. The cycle begins again. After all, no beauty is everlasting.'

## Disseminating good practice

117. Much current support, for example through the National Strategies, focuses on schools in challenging circumstances or where standards are very low. Many local authorities no longer employ a subject adviser for English, the officer who has traditionally monitored and evaluated practice across an authority's schools and identified what works best in a local context. These local authorities rely instead on consultants whose task is primarily to support the implementation of

the National Strategies and to pursue centrally agreed training priorities. These consultants tend to work in either primary or secondary schools and are not, therefore, in a position to take an overview or share good practice across phases. This raises the following questions:

- Who is responsible for the strategic thinking about English within local authorities?
- Who, apart from Ofsted, spends time in good schools identifying effective practice and who links schools and teachers together so that they can improve provision?
- To whom can schools turn if their provision in English is satisfactory but they want to get better?

118. For science there are nine regional centres and a national centre to support developments.<sup>33</sup> Two years ago, the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics was established. Its role is to provide leadership and vision by bringing together, commissioning and disseminating research into good practice in mathematics teaching.<sup>34</sup> It may be that a similar organisation is now needed for English, to provide national leadership, focused primarily on identifying good practice and using it to improve achievement across all schools. The need for clear subject leadership in English is particularly compelling at a time when the Key Stage 3 tests have been stopped and when teachers are being encouraged to exercise freedom and flexibility in developing the curriculum.

## English at the crossroads

119. If standards are to rise further, all schools need to reflect on what works generally and how this can be adapted to their own classrooms. This section summarises the features of outstanding practice identified in this report. It does not set out to be comprehensive but, rather, to identify features noted in the best schools visited.

120. In the outstanding schools, the teaching and learning of English were of high quality because:

- teaching was consistently good, the result of effective recruitment and retention, with senior leaders spending time assuring the quality of what happened in the classrooms
- teaching was flexible and responsive to pupils' particular needs in the class, rather than being based on preconceived views of what constituted a good lesson

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<sup>33</sup> For further information, see: [www.sciencelearningcentres.org.uk](http://www.sciencelearningcentres.org.uk).

<sup>34</sup> For further information, see: [www.ncetm.org.uk](http://www.ncetm.org.uk).

- teachers had good subject knowledge and used on-going assessment within the classroom to identify pupils' learning needs and to adjust lesson plans accordingly
- teachers chose simple, clear objectives that focused on the learning planned for the lesson and then selected activities that would best promote it
- teachers set out to engage and motivate pupils through practical, creative and purposeful activities
- the use of teaching assistants was planned carefully to maximise their impact, ensuring that they were fully employed at all stages of the lesson
- lessons encouraged pupils to think of themselves as writers, gave them time to write fully, provided clear audiences and purposes for their writing and encouraged them to choose the topics and forms for their work.

121. In the outstanding schools, the English curriculum was effective at driving up standards because:

- the subject team regularly reviewed provision to ensure that it reflected changes in society, ICT and pupils' literacy needs
- the teachers responded to pupils' interests and the world in which they lived, and sought to extend their experiences and knowledge
- the schools used time and teaching resources creatively to provide independent learning, extended study and purposeful homework
- the overall aims and key elements of the English curriculum were discussed with pupils so that they could see where lessons were leading and why the subject was important
- units of work were planned around outcomes that were practical, creative and clearly understood by pupils, using real audiences and purposes where possible
- attention was focused on pupils' use and understanding of spoken language and talk was pursued as an end in itself, not employed only as preparation for writing
- there was a planned and coherent approach to developing and promoting pupils' wider reading outside school.

122. In the outstanding schools, leadership and management made a real difference to learning in English because:

- the subject leaders communicated a clear vision and a sense of direction for the subject and the implications for teaching and learning
- the headteachers provided direct support, based on leadership in the curriculum, and an understanding of the subject's needs and its importance to learning

- emphasis on the importance of what happens in the classroom and the priority given to ensuring effective teaching and learning were unrelenting
- the subject leaders used performance data and other information effectively to identify trends in achievement across different groups of pupils and to set high expectations for all pupils
- the teachers listened to what pupils said about English and used it to improve the curriculum
- subject plans were simple, clear, focused on improving achievement, and built in effective evaluation
- the subject team had a clear and consistent understanding about how to use marking and curricular targets to inform planning and to help pupils with the next steps in learning.

123. This report has highlighted differences between schools in the nature of the English curriculum they provide. In some of the schools visited, it is innovative, using developments in modern technology effectively. In others, it has changed little since the National Curriculum was introduced in 1989. There is an increasing acceptance that 'one size does not fit all' and that the curriculum should be adapted to meet the particular needs of pupils in a school, as well as reaching out to those pupils who are not currently engaged by the subject. Teachers need to decide what English should look like as a subject in the 21st century and how they can improve the motivation and achievement of pupils who traditionally do less well in the subject. To engage them more successfully, schools need to provide a more dynamic and productive curriculum in English that reflects the changing nature of society and pupils' literacy needs. The following is a good example of how this can be done.

This is a smaller than average secondary school now working in federation with another small secondary school. The number of students who receive free school meals is below average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups has grown to around one in four.

The curriculum is highly developed, forward looking and reviewed frequently. Schemes of work are adjusted so that teaching keeps pace with developments in society and communications. The curriculum tries to develop skills that the students will need for the future.

The teaching of media, the moving image and ICT is closely integrated within English and mapped effectively to ensure continuity and progression of skills and understanding. A very broad range of units of work requires students to apply their skills and understanding through using media equipment and software. The Key Stage 3 curriculum involves exploring web pages and analysing television programmes, as well as studying *Romeo and Juliet* and reading traditional texts from the literary heritage. The teachers' subject knowledge is very good. They are

encouraged to develop specific schemes of work and become expert in particular aspects, benefiting from effective school-based training. The team is well led by an advanced skills teacher, who provides a model of very good practice and drives developments.

Successful projects include many which provide choice for students. The Year 9 media project, for example, offers five options: silent cinema; an advertising project; TV news; a computer program on *The Tempest*; and work on branding. Each unit has clear outcomes and requires considerable skills from the students, as well as good organisation and perseverance. Curriculum days are used well to provide students with extended work. This encourages them to take responsibility for their learning and to show that they can work collaboratively and independently.

Students enjoy their work and show high levels of skill and understanding. They are aware of how they can transfer skills, such as analysis, between different texts and media. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average and over 80% of students achieve grades A\* to C in English. Progress is outstanding across both key stages and the school has been in the top 10% nationally for the past three years. All students achieve very well and the gap between boys' and girls' results is smaller than average.

## Notes

This report is based on evidence from inspections of English in 122 primary schools and 120 secondary schools across England between April 2005 and March 2008, as well as on national test and examination data. The sample of schools included a small number (seven) selected specifically on the basis of high achievement or good practice known from previous inspection. To allow for fairer comparison, the judgements made on the quality of provision in these schools have not been incorporated into the overall judgements.

Further sources of evidence include the Annual Reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and other reports published by Ofsted. The evidence was also informed by discussions with those involved in English education, including teachers and pupils, subject leaders and senior staff in schools, academics, policy makers and others within the wider subject community.

## Further information

### Publications by Ofsted

*An evaluation of National Strategy intervention programmes* (070256), Ofsted, 2009; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070256>.

*Assessment for learning: the impact of National Strategy support* (070244), Ofsted, 2008; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070244>.

*Early years: getting on well* (070059), Ofsted, 2007; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070059>.

*English 2000-05* (HMI 2351), Ofsted, 2005; [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/English-2000-05-a-review-of-inspection-evidence/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/English-2000-05-a-review-of-inspection-evidence/(language)/eng-GB).

*Good school libraries: making a difference to learning* (2624), Ofsted, 2006; [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Leadership/Governance/Good-school-libraries-making-a-difference-to-learning/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Leadership/Governance/Good-school-libraries-making-a-difference-to-learning/(language)/eng-GB).

*Poetry in schools* (070034), Ofsted, 2007; [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Poetry-in-schools/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Poetry-in-schools/(language)/eng-GB).

*Responses to the Rose Review: schools' approaches to the systematic teaching of phonics* (080038), Ofsted, 2008; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080038>.

*The importance of ICT: information and communication technology in primary and secondary schools, 2005/2008* (070035), Ofsted, 2009; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070035>.

*White boys from low-income backgrounds: good practice in schools* (070220), Ofsted, 2008; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070220>.

*Yes he can: schools where boys write well* (HMI 505), Ofsted, 2003; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/505>.

### Other publications

*Getting going: generating, shaping and developing ideas in writing* (00283) DCSF, 2008.

*Readers and reading, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS),*  
NFER, 2006.

*Shakespeare for all ages and stages (00470),* DCSF, 2008.

## Annex: Schools visited for the survey

### Primary schools

School	Local authority
All Saints CofE Primary School	Wandsworth
Anston Park Infant School	Rotherham
Arthur Dye Primary School	Gloucestershire
Avenue Primary School	Norfolk
Barnfield Primary School	Barnet
Bishops Tachbrook CofE School	Warwickshire
Brackenbury Primary School	Hammersmith & Fulham
Broke Hall Primary School	Suffolk
Bullamore Junior School	North Yorkshire
Burnley Heasandford Primary School	Lancashire
Carter Knowle Junior School	Sheffield
Challock Primary School	Kent
Charnock Hall Primary School	Sheffield
Christ Church Pellon CofE VC Primary School	Calderdale
Christchurch Primary School	Essex
Churchdown Village Infant School	Gloucestershire
Clayton-le-Moors All Saints Church of England Primary School	Lancashire
Cliddesden Primary School	Hampshire
Coates Primary School	Cambridgeshire
Colliers Green Church of England Primary School	Kent
Corpus Christi RC Primary School	Oldham
Cottesbroke Junior School	Birmingham
Craven Primary School	Kingston Upon Hull, City of
Curzon Church of England Combined School	Buckinghamshire
Dunston Riverside Community Primary School	Gateshead
Easington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	East Riding of Yorkshire
East Acton Primary School	Ealing
Ebchester CofE Primary School	Durham

Edward Wilson Primary School	Westminster
Florendine Primary School	Staffordshire
Forest Row Church of England Primary School	East Sussex
Forest View Primary School	Gloucestershire
Foston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	North Yorkshire
Freemans Endowed Church of England Junior School	Northamptonshire
Frogwell Primary School	Wiltshire
Gawcott Community Infant School	Buckinghamshire
Gooderstone Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	Norfolk
Gospel Oak Primary School	Camden
Grange Middle School	Harrow
Grange Primary School	Ealing
Great Glen St Cuthbert's School	Leicestershire
Hadrian Primary School	South Tyneside
Hampton Dene Primary School	Herefordshire
Hamsterley Primary School	Durham
Harrington Junior School	Derbyshire
Harrow Gate Primary School	Stockton-on-Tees
Hayfield Lane Primary School	Doncaster
Henleaze Junior School	City of Bristol
Higham St John's Church of England Primary School	Lancashire
Hollinhey Primary School	Cheshire
Hook Norton Church of England Primary School	Oxfordshire
Hustwaite Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	North Yorkshire
James Wolfe Primary School	Greenwich
Jessop Primary School	Lambeth
Kenninghall Primary School	Norfolk
King David's Infant School	Manchester
Lamplugh CofE School	Cumbria
Langley Park Primary School	Durham

Laurance Haines Primary School	Hertfordshire
Letchmore Infants and Nursery School	Hertfordshire
Longstone CofE Primary School	Derbyshire
Luddenden Dene Primary School	Calderdale
Margaret McMillan Primary School	Bradford
Matley Primary School	Peterborough
Mayfield Church of England Primary School	East Sussex
Meynell Community Primary	Sheffield
Middleton Primary and Nursery School	Nottingham City
Monteney Primary School	Sheffield
Northfield Primary and Nursery School	Nottinghamshire
Oakway Infant School	Northamptonshire
Osballdwick Primary School	York
Our Lady's RC Primary School	Wigan
Padiham St Leonard's School	Lancashire
Park Grove Primary School	York
Parklee Community School	Wigan
Pilsley CofE Primary School	Derbyshire
Princes Risborough Primary School	Buckinghamshire
Queensbridge Primary School	Hackney
Rossgate Primary School	Hertfordshire
Ryelands Primary School	Croydon
Samlesbury Church of England School	Lancashire
Sandy Lane Primary School	Bradford
Saviour CofE Primary School	Manchester
Scott Lower School	Bedfordshire
Seer Green Church of England Combined School	Buckinghamshire
Snettisham Primary School	Norfolk
South Farnborough Infant School	Hampshire
South Petherwin Community Primary School	Cornwall
Southfield Primary School	Ealing
St Andrew's Junior, Infant & Nursery School (now Bordesley Primary)	Birmingham
St Anne's School	Sheffield

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School	Kent
St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School	Richmond upon Thames
St Helen's Primary School, Ipswich	Suffolk
St John's Church of England Primary School	Somerset
St John's CofE (Aided) Primary School	Reading
St John's Church of England Primary School	Bristol, City of
St Luke's CofE Primary School	Manchester
St Mary's CofE Primary School	Brent
St Peter's Church of England Controlled Primary School	Telford & Wrekin
St Stephen's Community Primary School	Cornwall
St Theresa's RC School	Barnet
St Thomas More Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School	Hertfordshire
St Thomas of Canterbury RC School	Bolton
St Wulstan's Primary School	Worcestershire
Stewart Headlam Primary School	Tower Hamlets
Stoke Lodge Primary School	South Gloucestershire
Sunnyside Primary School	Northamptonshire
The Downs Church of England Primary School	Kent
The Hayes Primary School	Croydon
Thythorn Field Community Primary School	Leicestershire
Tinsley Junior School	Sheffield
Watton Junior School	Norfolk
Weatheralls Primary School	Cambridgeshire
Welford Sibbertoft and Sulby Endowed School	Northamptonshire
Welton Church of England Primary School	Northamptonshire
Whitchurch Primary School	Harrow
Whitefields Primary School	Bury
William Ford CofE Junior School	Barking & Dagenham
Woodside Primary School	Shropshire
Wroughton Middle School	Norfolk

## Secondary schools

School	Local authority
Acton High School	Ealing
Alleyes High School	Staffordshire
Arthur Mellows Village College	Peterborough
Beaumont Leys School	Leicester City
Belle Vue Girls' School	Bradford
Beverley High School	East Riding of Yorkshire
Birley Community College	Sheffield
Bishop Luffa Church of England School	West Sussex
Blessed William Howard School	Staffordshire
Bradon Forest School	Wiltshire
Brayton College	North Yorkshire
Broadlands High School	Bath & North East Somerset
Camborne Science and Community College	Cornwall
Canons High School	Harrow
Cardinal Newman High School	Luton
Cardinal Wiseman Catholic Technology College	Birmingham
Carterton Community College	Oxfordshire
Castle Hall School	Kirklees
Challney High School for Boys and Community College	Luton
Cherry Willingham Community School	Lincolnshire
Chingford Foundation School	Waltham Forest
City of Leeds School	Leeds
Connaught School for Girls	Waltham Forest
Coppice Performing Arts School	Wolverhampton
Crown Woods School	Greenwich
Darton High School	Barnsley
Easington Community School	Durham
Enfield Grammar School	Enfield
Fernwood School	Nottingham City
Ferryhill Business Enterprise College	Durham

Gateacre Community Comprehensive School	Liverpool
George Farmer Technology & Language College	Lincolnshire
Gillots High School	Oxfordshire
Gosforth High School	Newcastle upon Tyne
Grays Convent High School	Thurrock
Great Wyrley High School	Staffordshire
Great Yarmouth (VA) High School	Norfolk
Hasmonean High School	Barnet
Hatch End High School	Harrow
Hatfield High School	Doncaster
Hayesfield School Technology College	Bath & North East Somerset
Henley-in-Arden High School	Warwickshire
Henlow VC Middle School	Central Bedfordshire
Hextable School	Kent
Highcliffe School	Dorset
Highfields Science Specialist School	Wolverhampton
Hitchin Girls School	Hertfordshire
Holbrook High School	Suffolk
Holmesdale Technology College	Kent
Holy Trinity CofE Secondary School	West Sussex
Isebrook School	Northamptonshire
Ivanhoe College	Leicestershire
Kenton School	Newcastle upon Tyne
Keswick School	Cumbria
Launceston College	Cornwall
London Nautical School	Lambeth
Moorside High School	Staffordshire
Newmarket Upper School	Suffolk
Nicholas Chamberlaine Technology College	Warwickshire
Norton College	North Yorkshire
Oakfield School	Somerset
Our Lady and St Bede RC School	Stockton-on-Tees
Painsley Catholic High School	Staffordshire

Parkside Community College	Cambridgeshire
Phoenix High School	Hammersmith & Fulham
Rainford High Technology College	St Helens
Ralph Allen School	Bath & North East Somerset
Raven's Wood School	Bromley
Rawmarsh Community School	Rotherham
Regents Park Community College	Southampton
Ridgewood High School	Dudley
Rising Brook High Specialist Sports College	Staffordshire
Royal Docks High School	Newham
Royston High School	Barnsley
Sheringham High School	Norfolk
Shevington High School	Wigan
Shorefields School	Liverpool
Shotton Hall School	Durham
Sir William Romney's School	Gloucestershire
St Anne's Catholic High School for Girls	Enfield
St Edmund's Catholic School	Portsmouth
St Francis Xavier School	North Yorkshire
St Michael's RC School	Southwark
St Richard's Catholic College	East Sussex
St Wilfrid's CofE High School and Technology College	Blackburn with Darwen
Stanground College	Peterborough
Stewards School	Essex
Stourport High School	Worcestershire
Stretford High School	Trafford
Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls	Birmingham
Swanhurst School	Birmingham
Tavistock College	Devon
Test Valley High School	Hampshire
The Alfred Barrow School	Cumbria
The Chafford School	Havering
The Deepings School	Lincolnshire

The Denes High School	Suffolk
The Douay Martyrs Catholic School	Hillingdon
The Grey Coat Hospital	Westminster
The Grove School	Shropshire
The Henrietta Barnett School	Barnet
The Hermitage School	Durham
The Hurst Community School	Hampshire
The King David High School	Manchester
The King's School Specialising in Mathematics and Computing	Wakefield
The Kingstone School	Barnsley
The Ridings School	Calderdale
The Thomas Coram Middle School	Hertfordshire
Trevelyan Middle School	Windsor & Maidenhead
Tweedmouth Community Middle School	Northumberland
Urmston Grammar School	Trafford
Wales High School	Rotherham
Walker Technology College	Newcastle upon Tyne
Wareham Middle School	Dorset
West Leeds High School	Leeds
West Park School	Derby
William Allitt School	Derbyshire
William Howard School	Cumbria
Windmill Middle School	Worcestershire
Woodkirk High Specialist Science School	Leeds
Yewlands School Technology College	Sheffield