

Adapted extract from
Moving English forward: action to raise standards in English
March 2012, Ofsted Report No. 110118

This report is in two parts. Part A highlights the main strengths and weaknesses in English and presents the evidence from the survey inspection visits. Part B takes forward the findings from Part A to analyse 10 areas of weakness and identify the actions that would help to improve practice in these areas and contribute to higher standards of English in schools.

Key findings

1. *Attainment in English has risen in secondary schools since 2008, but there has been only limited improvement overall in attainment in English in primary schools.*
2. *A large majority of schools in the sample were judged to be good or outstanding in English. Around 30% were no better than satisfactory. Provision was broadly the same across primary and secondary schools, although there was more outstanding practice in secondary schools.*
3. *An increasing number of children were assessed as being secure in communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).¹ However, a minority of children did not achieve these levels and where this was the case, schools were not always systematic enough in developing their early communication skills.*
4. *The quality of teaching was good or outstanding in seven in 10 of the lessons seen. In these lessons, teaching plans were clear about the key learning for pupils, teaching was flexible and responded to pupils' needs as the lesson developed, and tasks were meaningful, giving pupils real audiences and contexts where possible.*
5. *The quality of pupils' learning was hampered in weaker lessons by a number of 'myths' about what makes a good lesson. The factors that most commonly limited learning included: an excessive pace; an overloading of activities; inflexible planning; and limited time for pupils to work independently. Learning was also constrained in schools where teachers concentrated too much or too early on a narrow range of test or examination skills.*
6. *The curriculum for English was judged to be good or outstanding in the large majority of schools inspected. The most successful schools were those that had identified the particular needs of their pupils and then designed a distinctive curriculum to meet those needs.²*

¹ Pupils achieving six or more points at EYFS for each of the communication, language and literacy scales 2008–11.

² *Excellence in English* (100229), Ofsted, 2011; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100229>.

35 7. However, few of the secondary schools visited had taken the opportunity, following the ending of the Year 9 statutory tests, to refresh their Key Stage 3 schemes of work. The best schools provided students with tasks that had practical outcomes beyond the classroom, thus reinforcing the importance and relevance of the subject, but this was not common enough across the survey schools.

40 8. Although the survey uncovered areas of good practice, the quality of transition between Key Stages 2 and 3 in English was too often no better than satisfactory. The lack of regular communication and exchange of ideas between primary and secondary schools created problems for continuity in teaching and assessment. There was similar evidence about whole-school literacy. This report includes some examples of good practice but the majority of schools visited did not have systematic procedures in place to develop good literacy practice across all departments.

45 The survey found that too few schools gave enough thought to ways of encouraging the love of reading, and a sizeable minority of pupils failed to reach national expectations in reading. The teaching of writing was variable in quality, with too little attention given to spelling and handwriting.

- 50 • Leadership and management were judged to be good or outstanding in most schools surveyed. More secondary than primary schools had outstanding leadership and management. The report links this with the lack of subject specialists in primary schools and suggests that this is one of the reasons for slower improvement in English in primary schools.

Task A - Identifying the meaning of words and phrases

Select the most suitable alternatives for the following words and phrases as they appear in the text. (line numbers in brackets)

1	Provision was broadly the same (11)	
a	the staffing ratio and resourcing were the same across the phases	
b	the resources were similar	
c	the teaching was similar	
2	being secure in communication, language and literacy (14-15)	
a	being more able in communication skills	
b	showing the appropriate development for their age	
c	showing better than average development in communication skills	
3	systematic (17)	
a	using a reading scheme	
b	accurately linking target setting, assessment and tracking	
c	spending the right amount of time on reading with the children	

4	teaching was flexible (19-20)	
a	teaching responded well to the developing needs of the pupils	
b	teaching was unplanned	
c	teachers were able to move between classes easily	
5	Learning was also constrained (25)	
a	Learning was well developed	
b	Learning flourished	
c	Learning was restricted	
6	distinctive curriculum (30)	
a	a curriculum reflecting the specific needs of that school	
b	a curriculum limited by lack of imagination	
c	a curriculum in need of revision	
7	statutory tests (33)	
a	optional assessments	
b	tests the school had designed for a specific year group	
c	tests that the schools have to administer, then record and report the results	
8	the quality of transition (37)	
a	the ability of children to cope with the move from primary to secondary	
b	the necessary arrangements for school transfer	
c	the success schools have in making the transition between phases smooth	
9	good literacy practice (42-43)	
a	giving the children lots of opportunity for reading and writing	
b	teaching methods that promote and develop literacy effectively	
c	concentrating on literacy testing	
10	national expectations (45)	
a	the standards in terms of improvement measures demanded by the govt.	
b	what the school can expect from government policy	
c	what parents can expect in the performance of the school	

Task B - Evaluating statements about the text

Read the ten statements below. **Label each one** to denote whether the statement is supported, implied or explicitly contradicted. Mark each either **S**, **I**, **NE** or **EC**.

	source		
1	Key finding 2	That there is more outstanding practice in secondary schools can be attributed to their having specialist English teachers on the staff.	
2	Key finding 3	Improvement in the children's communication skills in an EYFS setting comes from systematic development.	
3	Key finding 4	There is a direct correlation between good and outstanding lessons and the clarity in the planning of the key learning.	
4	Key finding 5	Learning can be hampered when teachers teach to the tests.	
5	Key finding 5	Where teachers subscribe to commonly held beliefs about the nature and conduct of a good lesson the children invariably succeed.	
6	Key finding 6	The most successful English curricula are those designed around the needs of the pupils	
7	Key finding 7	Were more secondary schools to embrace the current opportunities for curricular innovation in key stage three students would benefit more.	
8	Key finding 8	The good communication that exists between secondary schools and the feeder primaries ensures the exchanged of ideas that facilitate the smooth transition of the pupils between phases.	
9	Key finding 8	Most secondary schools have systematic and effective procedures to promote whole school literacy	
10	Line 48	Were there to be more specialist English teachers in primary schools the standard of the children's communication skills would improve considerably.	

Answers

Task A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a	b	b	a	c	a	c	c	b	a

Task B

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I	I	S	S	EC	S	I	EC	EC	I