

Head has secret of success with boys

Boys beat girls in KS2 English tests



A LONDON primary is bucking the national trend: its boys are doing better than its girls at English, writes Helen Ward.

At Duncombe primary in Islington, 62 per cent of boys and 58 per cent of girls achieved the target of level 4 or above in English.

Head Barrie O'Shea said the gap had been narrowed without focusing on gender, attributing his success to an American literacy scheme.

With the Office for Standards in Education now focusing on the gap between boys' and girls' achievement, chief inspector Mike Tomlinson will be keen to know how Duncombe does it.

The OFSTED report assessing the third year of the National Literacy Strategy shows that girls have responded much better to the literacy hour than boys.

In 300 schools monitored by inspectors, 80 per cent of 11-year-old girls gained level 4 or above in English, compared to 70 per cent of boys. The gap was most noticeable in writing where girls were 15 percentage points ahead.

OFSTED plans to carry out further research into the trend. Mr Tomlinson said: "We want to know what is happening in schools which might enhance boys' results in English."

The turnaround at Duncombe, 475-pupil school inspected this week, is being credited to an American literacy strategy called Success For All.

"It really does seem to work," said Mr O'Shea. "All children are grouped for literacy lessons according to ability, regardless of age. They are assessed every eight weeks so no one is put in a group and left there all year."

"We also have intensive tutoring and a co-operative learning strategy. This strategy involves a lot of discussion. Our kids answer us in structured sentences, not one-word answers. ~Children are not allowed to be passive, we get them to talk and everyone has to be involved."

"It encourages all the children - boys as well as girls."

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