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19 November 2010

Mrs B Simpson  
Headteacher  
George Eliot Junior School  
Marlborough Hill  
London  
NW8 0NH

Dear Mrs Simpson

### **Ofsted 2010–11 best practice study: English**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visits on 5 July and 9 November 2010 to look at work in English.

The visits provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in English. The publication will include case studies about individual providers. If your school is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment before publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: discussions with senior managers, teachers and pupils; observation of seven lessons; a review of departmental documents; and scrutiny of pupils' work.

### **Features of good practice**

- Your strong and innovative curriculum management underpins continuity of approach and highly effective learning throughout the school. There is well-targeted support for pupils across a wide ability range, many of whom arrive with very limited knowledge of English language and culture.
- Lessons are planned in detail to ensure progression and to meet pupils' individual needs. These plans are structured clearly, ensuring that pupils know what it is they are to learn and are led through a sequence of activities that is both accessible and challenging.
- Use of well chosen images and of stories told in part through pictures to develop pupils' imagination and thinking skills is highly effective. Pupils are keen to explain how this approach not only engages their interest but also

develops their ability to interpret information, to make inferences and to be imaginative in their own talking and writing. 'The author wants you to infer through the pictures, to predict and think.' 'You have more fun. You look closely and see things you didn't notice at first.' A very discerning selection of texts and resources contributes hugely to the success of this 'visual literacy'.

- Pupils also respond very productively to the opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility for aspects of their learning. This is well demonstrated in the school's firmly structured programme of 'reciprocal teaching', in which pupils take responsibility for each other's progress as readers as well as developing their own skills in a highly organised way. The process was summed up by one pupil as 'giving and receiving'. Another commented: 'Because we're doing it ourselves, we're in control. We get the responsibility.' Their independent learning is, however, carefully monitored and supported by the class teacher.
- Other strengths of the teaching observed included: secure subject knowledge; enterprising use of technology; excellent questioning skills; a very good rapport between teachers and pupils; and some excellent practice in differentiation. Close monitoring of teaching and learning shapes the school's enterprising and well-targeted programme of professional development.
- The positive impact of the curriculum and of approaches to teaching and learning can be seen in the outstanding progress made by pupils. From what is in many instances a very low starting point, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is well above average. The results for 2010 show over 93% gaining Level 4 and 45% gaining Level 5. This represents outstanding achievement. Girls, on the whole, make better progress than boys.

**An area for development, which we discussed, is:**

- extending and reinforcing strategies to close the achievement gap between boys and girls.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Patricia Metham**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**