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Mr I Kendal  
Headteacher  
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Hertfordshire  
SG14 2BY

Dear Mr Kendal

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: English**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 February 2011 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of parts of four lessons; and a learning walk, taking in Years 1, 2 and 3.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

### **Achievement in English**

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Attainment in English has been consistently well above average over recent years by the end of Key Stage 2. All sizeable groups of pupils do exceptionally well.
- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a low level of skills in communication, language and literacy but by the time they start Year 1 their skills are broadly average for their age. Progress from Key Stages 1 to 2, as measured by the contextual value-added measures, has been good over the last three years and there is a rising trend. Progress based on prior attainment is significantly above average. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made similar progress.

- Pupils enjoy their learning in English, especially stories, poetry and creative writing, and appreciate the good balance of teacher-led and independent or group-led activities. Their behaviour and responses in lessons are outstanding.
- The school is aware that the very small number of pupils eligible for free school meals did not do as well as others and has introduced measures to address this issue.

### **Quality of teaching in English**

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- The teaching observed was outstanding overall. Lessons are taught at a fast and lively pace where teachers skilfully vary the style of activity and learning.
- Lessons are characterised by pupils developing their speaking and listening skills well through partner talk and group work enquiry. Teachers know their pupils well and vary the level of challenge in questioning accordingly with higher-attaining pupils expected to fully justify their answers.
- Pupils have a clear idea of what they should learn and tasks are set for a real purpose, for example helping a teacher to finish a poem she has started. They also have the opportunity for quiet reflection and independent research where they take responsibility for their own learning. They give support to each other and regularly assess each other's work with praise and points for development.
- Teachers' marking in English clearly indicates how well pupils have achieved and the level they have attained. Pupils know how they can improve their work. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very strong and lead to a positive learning environment.

### **Quality of the curriculum in English**

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- Pupils speak highly of the richness and diversity within the English curriculum which caters for a wide range of interests for boys and girls through poetry, creative and imaginative writing as well as suspense stories, diaries and biographies.
- Pupils have opportunities to apply their literacy skills in other subjects particularly in religious education for research-based activities as well as in science, history and information and communication technology.
- Very good links exist with a local secondary school which last year led to their drama and English teachers working with gifted and talented writers in Year 6. Arrangements for transition include a summer school for pupils transferring from Year 6 to secondary school.
- Pupils appreciate the extensive range of clubs available, including the calligraphy club and guided reading sessions. Film and drama clubs, the school magazine and a Jackanory story-telling group all make a significant

contribution to pupils developing their literacy skills. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 have written and performed plays for pupils in Key Stage 1.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in English**

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- You and other senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development in English. You have established an innovative model of leadership in English through curriculum teams where each member takes responsibility for English at a different key stage. Strong links exist between the curriculum team and senior leaders.
- The curriculum team plan has accurately identified areas for development, including the monitoring of writing and the progress of pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Monitoring of individual pupils' progress is a strength which gives the school accurate data to provide intervention and support for anyone at risk of falling behind. Consequently, the performance of boys' writing improved significantly when data indicated this was an issue and the school provided effective strategies to raise their achievement.
- You have given thoughtful consideration to the way you have deployed your outstanding teachers of English to provide the opportunity to model the very best practice for others.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- raising standards in English for pupils eligible for free school meals by:
  - identifying strategies in lessons that engage and enthuse them to write independently
  - working closely with parents and carers to ensure that pupils are given every opportunity to take up extra-curricular activities at school and develop their literacy skills at home.

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

**Mark Sims**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**