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Mr J Gadd
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gadd

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 20 March 2013, 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 you and your senior leaders, year and subject leaders, staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons, three with you or one of your assistant headteachers.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Pupils' levels of attainment in reading and writing on entry to your school in Year 4 are largely average or below. After a dip in 2011, results in Year 6 national tests rose again in 2012. Achievement over time is significantly higher than average, which represents excellent progress. Pupils do not lose momentum after the Year 6 national tests. They enjoy and respond purposefully to the challenges presented in Year 7.
- Very well-directed and carefully monitored strategies successfully develop pupils' ability to respond with confident understanding and imagination to a wide range of texts and to plan and unfold their ideas in writing. Pupils' creative writing, especially their poetry, is generally vivid, characterful and well-crafted.
- Those who need extra help and the small number known to be eligible for additional government funding (the Pupil Premium) progress as well as

their contemporaries, benefiting particularly from the support given by skilled teaching assistants in lessons as well as from small-group teaching and one-to-one help with reading.

Teaching in English is outstanding.

- Teachers and teaching assistants clearly take pleasure in sharing their subject knowledge and skills with each other as well as with pupils. In all year groups, there is a strong sense of collaboration – between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Lively discussion and cheerful teamwork are at the core of every lesson. As pupils comment, the more active the process, the better their learning. This was well demonstrated in a Year 6 exploration of a chapter in 'Street Child', when characters' motives and relationships were explored through role play and debate, kept sharply focused by the teacher's questions and observations.
- Lesson plans build on earlier learning and most cater for the range and variety of ability and learning styles in each class. Expectations are high. Pupils' understanding of the ground being covered is regularly checked, through whole-class question-and-answer interludes and through teachers' review of individuals' work. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own and each other's work and are given clear guidelines so that the process is productive. Use of varied resources, including information and communication technology and film, adds to the liveliness of lessons.
- Most marking is regular, detailed and constructive. Pupils find the advice given and the questions asked very useful. There is evidence in pupils' books that advice has been followed and that this has led to sustained progress.
- On a few occasions, teachers try to fit too much into a lesson, so that there is limited time for ideas to be pursued fully or for an unplanned but potentially productive diversion to be explored. Similarly, pupils are not always given time to make sufficient headway with a task, especially writing, for them to feel a sense of achievement or to have done enough to make subsequent discussion of their writing seem useful in their eyes – they have high expectations for themselves and each other.

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- English is woven, often imaginatively, into cross-curricular topics such as 'The Victorians' and 'South Africa'. Every topic is built around fiction and non-fiction texts carefully selected to appeal to boys as well as girls and to be both challenging and accessible. From Year 4 onwards, pupils are encouraged to gather information and share ideas collaboratively, drawing on the school's substantial and well-presented resources. Pupils across the age and ability range enjoy opportunities for independent work and quickly learn to base their arguments on broad and well-organised evidence. This makes a major contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The topic-based approach successfully

encourages pupils to practise and improve their speaking and listening, reading and writing in varied contexts, both formal and informal.

- The mainstream curriculum is actively extended and enriched by events such as drama, debating and story-telling competitions, and by visits from theatre groups and writers. Pupils understand the value of these events: 'They are fun and they help us understand how things can be done.'

Leadership and management of English are outstanding.

- Given the large and rapidly expanding size of your school, your decision to develop a strong and cohesive team of year and subject leaders is proving practical and engaging. As one of the leadership group remarked, they want their passion for reading and writing to be 'visible to the children' – and pupils' responses show that it is!
- All aspects of English and literacy are firmly embedded in your school's development plan, with regular monitoring ensuring that pupils' progress sets priorities for staff training and coaching and for curriculum decisions. Transition from local schools into Year 4 is very carefully managed, with prompt and accurate assessments ensuring that pupils' abilities and needs are well supported and that there is continuity of learning. Links with high schools are less comprehensive at present, which raises some questions about pupils' progression through Key Stage 3.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing strategies to ensure that pupils' progress in literacy and English is not disrupted by the move from Year 7 in your school to Year 8 at high school.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector