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Dear Sister

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 25 January 2010 to look at work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit included a focus on our current survey theme of provision for gifted and talented pupils 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Attainment in English over the past three years has been significantly above the national average. Speaking, listening and reading are real strengths throughout the school. Pupils' writing skills are less well developed, with fewer pupils attaining high levels in this element.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, girls attain slightly higher results than boys but, overall, different groups make similar rates of progress. This reflects well-directed support for those who find English difficult and appropriate challenge for the most able. Over the past three years, progress has been significantly better than the national profile.

- Pupils are keen and mutually supportive learners. With strong encouragement from home, they take advantage of opportunities to extend their learning and raise their standards through independent study and enrichment activities. They are articulate, confident and ambitious.

### Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is good.

- Strengths observed included confident subject knowledge, good questioning skills and a very positive rapport with pupils. Careful lesson planning provided a variety of activity to engage and challenge pupils across the age and ability range. Very occasionally, the main purpose of an activity was not made clear, for example whether the focus was on discussion or note-taking. Pair and group work was used well to encourage teamwork and independent thinking but it was possible for one or two particularly confident pupils to dominate, so that not all were equally involved.
- Examples of very good practice in the marking of written work were seen, especially in Years 5 and 6, but there was some inconsistency across the school. In Year 3, for example, expectations were not always as challenging and pupils' targets were not regularly updated. Much work was lively and imaginative, but there was limited evidence of extended writing.

### Quality of the curriculum in English

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is constructed carefully to give excellent coverage of all the required elements and to encourage children's development both as learners and as social individuals. The recording of children's progress is detailed and expertly used to shape lesson planning.
- Curriculum provision is strongly inclusive, based on the Primary Framework but with very well-resourced opportunities for teachers to tailor content and approach to suit particular groups. Shared planning between English and history is productive and topics covered in English make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of national and international issues, such as the impact of the earthquake in Haiti.
- Pupils appreciate the extensive curriculum enrichment programme, taking advantage of opportunities to enhance their thinking and communication skills, for example through 'philosophy for children' sessions at a neighbouring school and through drama, music and art. The wealth of local resources is fully exploited, with help from parents and governors.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The recently appointed subject leader has led a thorough review of provision and its impact throughout the school and identified key areas for development. Regular sharing of best practice and moderating of assessment are strengthening teachers' skills in identifying pupils' levels of attainment and setting challenging targets. Long-term planning provides a clear framework for development, complemented by a programme of in-service training for staff, based on information about pupils' progress and lesson observations.
- The capacity for further improvement is outstanding. This is because of: clear and realistic self-evaluation by leadership and management; productive use of data to monitor progress, to set targets and to drive improvement; the pupils' very good motivation; and the exceptionally aspirational and supportive engagement of families and governors.

Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented pupils in English

- The subject leader works closely with the coordinator of provision for gifted and talented pupils to create opportunities for independent and collaborative learning, to present continual challenge within the mainstream curriculum through the texts and topics and approaches chosen, and to offer a broad and varied programme beyond the classroom. Pupils enjoy working with other schools to stretch their thinking and skills. London's varied resources are enthusiastically exploited.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further strengthening achievement by:
  - taking steps to close the gap between reading and writing, including the development of extended writing and the redrafting of work
  - establishing consistency in marking and the setting of personalised targets.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector