

News story: Ilford pupil celebrated in international short story competition

A school pupil recognised in an international short story competition has today (Monday 26 March) been awarded a prize for her success by Education Minister Nick Gibb, as part of the ongoing celebration of the history of the Commonwealth.

Alyssa Malley, aged ten, a pupil at Churchfields Junior School in Ilford, scooped third place out of 1,600 entries from across the Commonwealth. Alyssa's prize-winning story focused on ending conflict through recognition of the common values shared by people across the globe.

The annual Commonwealth Class Writing Competition – which is run by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the British Council – was themed around 'peace' this year and the first and second prizes were awarded to pupils from India and Pakistan.

This international recognition builds on the rising standards in our schools, with over 15,969 more pupils in Ilford in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010 and 95 per cent of Ilford schools given this rating at their last inspection.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Congratulations to Alyssa on this achievement. Despite fierce competition, it is brilliant to see a pupil from Ilford recognised on the global stage.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers and our reforms, academic standards are rising in England, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

This determination to offer every pupil a world-class education was evident at Churchfields Primary School, where I saw first-hand how pupils were broadening their understanding of the Commonwealth and its unique history.

In a visit to the school, Minister Gibb presented Alyssa with a certificate and a £30 book voucher to celebrate her achievement.

Nick Gibb presented the pupil with an award recognising her success in the Commonwealth Writing Competition. This is the second consecutive year in which pupils from Churchfields Junior School have been successful in this prestigious event, in which so many other students throughout the world take part. Alyssa commented that she was proud so many people across the world would hear her message of peaceful problem solving and she was looking forward to writing more stories in the future.

Mr Gibb also visited a lesson where pupils were being taught about the Commonwealth and what it means to be a member of this unique historic institution. Teachers were using an [education resource pack](#) – produced by the Department for Education – which aims to illustrate the importance of the Commonwealth to young people today.

Headteacher Mrs Emeny said:

Writing is a strength of Churchfields Junior School and the ministerial visit was a great opportunity for Nick Gibb to see our world-class school in action. As he toured the classrooms, I was pleased by his comments about the high levels of achievement and excellence he witnessed across the curriculum. During his visit, the Minister spoke to staff and pupils about our school ethos and how the wealth of opportunities we provide enable pupils to develop outstanding language and maths skills, as well as a deep cultural understanding.

Today's focus on the Commonwealth comes ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which will be hosted by Britain in April. Leaders, business, civil society and young people from around the world will meet to discuss a common future.

Sinead Russell, Senior Literature Programme Manager and Joe White, Literature Coordinator at the British Council from the judging pane said:

It was a privilege to read so many excellent stories from around the world. Although every story differs in its approach to this year's theme, what they all have in common is a depth of humanity and a feel for language which, quite frankly, humbled us.

All of the winning stories and highly commended entries, each illustrated by Tarsila Kruse, Children's Book Illustrator, can be seen on the British Council's Commonwealth Class [website](#).

Writing tips from Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, Myra Zepf and former Children's Laureate, Anne Fine can be downloaded [here](#).

The Commonwealth Class initiative enables schools to take part in online competitions and work on projects with the aim of giving young people a hands-on international learning experience based around the Commonwealth family of countries.