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Miss Heptinstall
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Dear Miss Heptinstall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Evaluation of the impact of the Primary National Strategy

I am grateful for the hospitality and co-operation of you and your staff, during my visit on 20 September 2006 to look at work in the Primary National Strategy (PNS).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the PNS, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of continuity and progression for pupils on entry to a new key stage.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

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

The overall effectiveness and impact of the PNS was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils enter the Nursery with standards below expectations in most areas of learning, with particular weaknesses in communication, language and literacy.

- Pupils make good progress throughout Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 so that by the age of 7, attainment in reading and writing is above that of the local authority (LA), but around the national average.
- Standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2 are similar to those of the LA and close to the national average. Pupils make satisfactory progress.
- The whole school focus on English is having a good impact in raising standards. As a result, there has been a steady improvement in speaking and listening, reading and writing. This has continued in 2006 in Key Stage 2, where standards in English improved at both Level 4+ and Level 5.

Quality of teaching and learning

Overall teaching is good with some that is outstanding.

- Teachers' planning is thorough. Clear lesson objectives and success criteria are shared with pupils, who fully understand what they are expected to learn. These are referred to at different stages of the lesson to review learning and inform assessment.
- Starter activities are conducted briskly and relate well to the main part of the lesson. Teachers use technical terms and concepts frequently and pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations of them.
- Good use of interactive displays such as word banks and regular use of interactive white boards (IWB) supports learning well.
- Good improvements and developments in Assessment for Learning (AFL) have been introduced, including the use of a variety of questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding. Good use is made of mini-whiteboards, focussed discussion, self or peer assessment and strategies such as hot seating.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly with affirmative and supportive comments ensuring informative feedback is provided for pupils. This gives pupils a clear idea of progress and what they need to do further.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Joint planning meetings ensure a consistent and progressive curriculum. The PNS frameworks are adapted appropriately to meet the needs of pupils.
- Staff are increasingly linking subjects together to make the curriculum more interesting and stimulating. The locality is used effectively to support learning.
- Good developments have taken place in embedding ICT across the curriculum. Increasing use is being made of interactive whiteboards. This is engaging and motivating for pupils, particularly boys, and inspires enjoyment.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of the strategy are good.

- Good strategic planning, monitoring and the analysis of outcomes have contributed to the recent improvement in standards throughout the school.
- New initiatives have been introduced methodically and are undertaken consistently by the whole school.
- The sharp focus on continuing professional development has been instrumental in improving teaching and has provided a firm foundation for developments across the school.

The quality of transition

The quality of transition is good.

- The school is organised into three phases. Years 1, 2 and 3 are in phase two. Teachers jointly plan the curriculum in each phase. This ensures continuity and progression and consistency of teaching style. All pupils are well known to staff in each phase.
- Accurate and regular assessment ensures that pupils' progress is monitored closely and that those needing extra support, particularly in reading and writing, are identified at an early stage. As a consequence, transition between Year 2 and 3 is smooth and continuous because there is no artificial barrier between the Key Stages.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is outstanding.

- The strong vision that the school 'will bring out the best in everyone' and that all pupils will succeed whatever their background or ability is realised in a stimulating and exciting learning atmosphere.
- The quality of relationships and the secure caring environment helps each and every child grow in confidence. The needs of all pupils are well met by sensitive and supportive staff who do everything to help each of them make the best possible progress.
- A good range of initiatives such as learning mentors, family events, links with secondary schools, visitors, trips and visits help support pupils' learning well.
- Very good partnerships with parents have been developed and these enable them to increase their understanding and support their children well in and out of school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- * to continue to focus on all aspects of English in order to raise standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing further, particularly in Key Stage 2.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to implement the Primary National Strategy.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector