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Mr M Foster
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Dear Mr Foster

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Evaluation of the impact of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies

I am grateful for the hospitality and co-operation of you and your staff during my visit with Pat Kime HMI on 28-29 September to look at work in the Secondary National Strategy (SNS).

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

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 4 lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

The strategy has made a significant impact, particularly in the last two years. In English and mathematics, pupils are achieving more highly and test results from 2006 show good improvement in standards. Predicted Year 9 results show good achievement from pupils' starting points.

In English, standards this year showed a significant improvement on previous years with many more pupils reaching a higher than average standard for their age. In mathematics, standards are improving and recent assessments show a significant improvement in performance.

There is a very good induction process which contributes significantly to pupils' personal development and their commitment to achieving well.

Quality of teaching and learning

The strategy has been the main driving force behind improvements in teaching and learning. Observation and scrutiny of work in English and mathematics confirms that pupils are taught more effectively as a result of the work of the strategy.

Assessment practice has improved and the strategy has played a key role. This can be seen in the quality of marking and target setting. Early support and guidance is greatly valued by pupils. It is highly effective at inducting them quickly into the school. Intervention programmes are working well to raise achievement, particularly for the least able.

Quality of curriculum

Programmes and activities in mathematics have substantially improved in the last year. The strategy has been influential in raising the quality of lesson planning and the needs of different groups of pupils are well met.

In English, the strategy has made a positive impact on writing. The impact on reading and the use of literature has not been as great.

Leadership and management

The strategy has made a good impact on leadership and management in English and mathematics. There is a good understanding in both subjects of how to move forward and improve standards. The overall leadership and management are successful and pupils are making much better progress as a result. The school accurately evaluates the work of the strategy.

The quality of transition to secondary school

There are very good and successful arrangements to ensure a smooth transition from Year 6. Pastoral care for vulnerable pupils is a particular strength. The school has a good awareness of what pupils have achieved before they start and is developing a good understanding of teaching in feeder primary schools.

Inclusion

There is a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities who benefit from very good pastoral and academic support. There is a very strong commitment to involve all pupils in every aspect of school life.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards in mathematics and reading
- developing planning for continuity in teaching from Year 6 to Key Stage 3.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the implementation of the National Strategy 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector