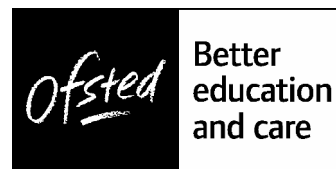


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07 November 2006

Mr A Green
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Green

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 Robert McKeown HMI on 30-31 October 2006 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 eight part lessons in English and two part and two whole lessons in mathematics in Year 6.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good overall.

- Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average in English. The 2006 provisional test results show an improvement from the previous year and are now in line with the national average. Overall, pupils' progress across Key Stage 2 is below expected levels. However, the school's tracking system indicates that pupils have made at least good progress in last year's Year 6. This reflects the school's successful strategies for improving reading and writing, especially for boys.
- Results in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are well below the national average. This has been the case over recent years. Pupils' achievement across Key Stage 2 is below expected levels in mathematics, although the school's own data shows that most pupils make satisfactory progress in Year 6. Pupils are in the school for one of the four years of Key Stage 2.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved significantly over the last five years since the introduction of the SNS. Standards in English at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national averages. Standards in mathematics are broadly in line. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' progress in both English and mathematics is outstanding.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The behaviour in lessons was very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The impact of the SNS is evident in structured teaching and purposeful learning which are well established. The effective teaching observed included: lesson aims that were understood by pupils and referred to by teachers at key points; tasks that were closely matched to pupils' different abilities so that good gains were made in learning; questions which developed pupils' thinking skills; reference to pupils' personal targets in lessons; the use of literacy skills and well chosen resources.
- There is good use of assessment information to identify underachievement and to involve pupils more in assessing their own work and that of their peers.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Departments use the SNS very effectively to improve teaching and learning, successfully implementing assessment for learning and the use of ICT.
- The school's strong commitment to the SNS has been recognised by the local authority. For example, the humanities department has gained an 'open department' status which involves staff in demonstrating effective practice to teachers from other schools.

- There is a strong curriculum enrichment programme which benefits pupils who have a wide range of abilities.

Leadership and management of SNS

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features.

- The school has used the SNS very effectively to focus its work on school improvement. This is demonstrated by the successful outcomes for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3.
- The leadership team has updated the process by which the school tracks pupils' attainment and achievement in order to strengthen further the procedures for monitoring pupils' progress, which is delegated to subject leaders. This is having a positive impact.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses which are communicated well to all staff, enabling them to actively participate in school improvement planning. A notable strength is the consistency of approach to improvement planning.

The quality of transition to secondary school

The leadership and management of transition are good.

- There is a longstanding and well organised transition programme which enables pupils to transfer successfully from primary schools. Senior staff take a keen interest in the transition process, making regular contact with partner schools to take assemblies and attend parents evenings.
- Leaders and managers meet regularly with staff in the partner schools to evaluate and plan for improvements in the transition programme. There is a good system in place for transferring attainment data and personal information.
- Bridging work in English and mathematics connects learning across Years 5 and 6 and a good quality induction programme ensures that pupils, including those at risk, settle well following transfer. There are similarly good arrangements for transition between Years 9 and 10.
- In spite of a history of regular transition work the impact this has had on improving attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been limited, particularly in mathematics.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- The school accurately identifies those pupils who have additional needs and caters well for them. Very good care and support is given to all pupils, for example through the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education programme.

- Very good support is given to pupils in Year 9 to help them achieve as well as they can. The school recognises that more could be done to enable pupils in Year 6 to be similarly supported.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raise standards and achievement in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to implement the Secondary 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

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector