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Mr Farr
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Farr

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

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07 February 2008 to look at work in the Primary National Strategy.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the Primary National Strategy, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of intervention strategies.

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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the Primary National Strategy was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The impact of intervention strategies on pupils' achievement and personal development is satisfactory.

- Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. They make better than expected progress in a minority of classes.
- Standards in mathematics have steadily improved in recent years and are now broadly average. Standards in English, however, are well

below average. There are wide variations in the performance of groups of pupils in both subjects. The standards reached by girls are much higher than boys and higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

- The variations in standards and progress largely stem from inconsistency between classes in teaching and learning.
- Pupils' personal development is good. The majority enjoy work, try hard and behave well, both in lessons and in intervention groups.

Quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The impact of intervention strategies on teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- The teaching of calculation methods is generally sound.
- Teachers are clear about which pupils are underachieving and ensure they receive additional support, either from themselves or from teaching assistants.
- When teaching assistants lead intervention groups, their explanations are clear and they help each individual to understand the work.
- The majority of teachers' planning does not make clear how work is adapted to meet the range of needs within the class. Nor does it make clear the purpose of the teaching assistants' support provided for intervention groups away from the classroom. As a result, this support is often very similar to the work being done by the rest of the class, without anything specific being planned to tackle the pupils' barriers to learning.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory. The impact of intervention strategies in the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum for all pupils, and for those in intervention groups, covers a good range of mathematical topics. It is made more interesting for the pupils by links to their everyday world.
- Teaching assistants effectively adapt Primary National Strategy support materials to meet the needs of their pupils. Very little is provided in addition to this when, for example, the barriers to learning have been identified as social and emotional difficulties. As a result, pupils are not making progress as quickly as they might.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in mathematics are satisfactory. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of intervention strategies is satisfactory.

- The leadership team has a clear view of the improvements needed to raise standards further.
- They are providing good direction in improving the use of assessment to identify which pupils are underachieving and which aspects of mathematics need to be emphasised in their additional support. The positive impact of this work demonstrates their capacity to bring about the required improvements.
- Arrangements for the professional development of teaching assistants are good and enable them to make a strong contribution to the teaching of intervention groups.

Intervention strategies and inclusion

The impact of intervention strategies overall and on inclusion is satisfactory.

- The school has good arrangements for identifying underachieving pupils. Additional support is provided for these pupils, which is accelerating their progress in a small number of classes. It is not, however, consistently effective in all classes, because it does not always meet the individual needs of the pupils.
- Interventions are mostly provided for lower attaining pupils who are underachieving. There is insufficient provision for the higher attaining pupils who are not making as much progress as they should.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that teaching and learning in all classes enables pupils to make good progress
- improving the use of lesson planning to adapt work to meet the range of pupils' needs
- improving the planning of interventions for underachieving and higher attaining pupils.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics and intervention strategies 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

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector