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Mrs Anderson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Anderson

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 06 February 2008 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 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 and three intervention groups.

The overall effectiveness of the 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.

- Standards in mathematics are broadly average. Work in the pupils' books and the school's own tracking data shows that current progress is satisfactory.

- Pupils who receive additional support through intervention programmes make satisfactory progress. Their progress is good in Years 5 and 6 but slower in Years 3 and 4.
- The Intensifying Support Programme and the selective use of other National Strategy resources have led to improving standards and rates of achievement. They are helping an increasing proportion of underachieving pupils to achieve the standards expected.
- The school makes satisfactory use of assessment to track the progress of all pupils and identify those who would benefit from additional support.

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.

- Teachers' good use of questioning reflects the positive impact of National Strategy training resources. Teaching assistants working with intervention groups consistently give pupils opportunities to explain their reasoning when they offer answers.
- Pupils with English as an additional language attend intervention sessions and receive effective specialist support. These interventions contribute positively to their satisfactory achievement.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Learning is slower in some classes when the most able pupils receive the same work as others.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers and teaching assistants stick too closely to the planned lesson and do not deal with pupils' misunderstandings as they arise.

Quality of curriculum

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

- The school adapts National Strategy materials or uses alternative resources to give underachieving pupils targeted support to improve their numeracy skills.
- There is clear guidance for teachers on how to plan and mark work in mathematics. Other policies, for example the guidance on teaching calculation, ensure that pupils develop their numeracy skills progressively.
- Information and communication technology successfully supports learning in mathematics, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils do not receive sufficient opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects.

Leadership and management

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

- Senior leaders provide sound direction for raising standards and achievement. They collect and analyse data in line with the principles promoted by the Intensifying Support Programme. This enables the school to target additional support accurately.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants working with intervention groups has not been carefully monitored and evaluated. Consequently, the leadership team is not fully aware of the professional development needs of staff who deliver many of the intervention strategies.
- The subject leader has a satisfactory awareness of strengths and weaknesses in mathematics' provision. However, there remains too much variation in the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. Action to support less effective teaching has not improved performance sufficiently.
- The improvement plan for mathematics contains precise and relevant action points. There are clear procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the plan. However, lesson observations focus more on what the teacher does than what the pupils are learning.

Intervention strategies and inclusion

The impact of intervention strategies overall is satisfactory.

- The intervention strategies are helping targeted pupils make progress that is in line with what is expected. Progress is no better than this because the quality of teaching, including interventions, is inconsistent across the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the consistency of teaching by providing sufficient challenge for the most able pupils and ensuring that misconceptions are dealt with effectively
- raising standards by ensuring better progress is made in Years 3 and 4.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector