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13 March 2008

Mrs McNally
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McNally

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 with Deana Holdaway HMI on 05 March 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 seven lessons and two intervention groups.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good. Senior leaders choose to use interventions other than those of the National Strategy.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' standards in mathematics are exceptionally high. Their achievement is good. The impact of intervention strategies on pupils' achievement and personal development is good.

- By the end of Years 2 and 6, the proportions of pupils achieving the highest levels are well above the national average.

- Progress in the lessons and in intervention sessions observed was good overall.
- The selective use of intervention programmes has improved standards and rates of achievement.
- Interventions for the most able pupils result in very high attainment.
- Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their intervention groups and feel that they are helping to improve their number skills.

Quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

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

- Adults know the pupils well and generally match activities accurately to their needs.
- A good balance between teacher-led whole class sessions and opportunities for pupils to work independently ensures a brisk pace to learning.
- Teachers' marking identifies errors and underlying misconceptions. This helps pupils to overcome difficulties.
- In the most successful interventions, learning support assistants use their good knowledge of individual pupils, and of the intervention programmes, to provide just the right amount of challenge.
- Pupils do not make good progress when, in a minority of lessons, the planned activities do not help them acquire the intended knowledge or skills.

Quality of curriculum

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

- The school mainly uses resources other than those associated with the National Strategy to give targeted pupils support in mathematics. These activities challenge and motivate the pupils.
- There is clear guidance for teachers on how to plan and mark work in mathematics.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) supports learning in mathematics very successfully both at school and at home.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities to use mathematics in other areas of the curriculum.

Leadership and management

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

- Senior leaders ensure a strong focus on raising standards and achievement. They collect and analyse data rigorously. This enables the school to target additional support accurately.
- The school takes great care selecting intervention programmes for the pupils. These informed decisions result in targeted pupils making good progress.
- The subject leader has a good knowledge of pupils' mathematical strengths and weaknesses.
- The improvement plan for mathematics contains precise and relevant action points. There are clear procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the plan.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants working with intervention groups has not been rigorously monitored and evaluated. As a consequence, there is some variation in the quality of provision.

Intervention strategies and inclusion

The impact of intervention strategies overall is good.

- The school has replaced or adapted the intervention programmes associated with the National Strategy.
- The practices and programmes adopted by the school are accelerating progress, particularly in the area of mental arithmetic.
- The intervention strategies are helping the targeted pupils make good progress. As the pupils move through the school, an increasing proportion achieves or surpasses the standards expected nationally.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all the activities provided for pupils in lessons help them acquire the intended skills and knowledge.

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