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Mr Glyn Ottery  
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Dear Mr Ottery

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 30-31 January 2008 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 impact of intervention strategies and the quality of programmes for disengaged / disaffected students.

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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, visit to the social inclusion room and observation of eight lessons of which three were extraction or intervention lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the SNS was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in English is good overall. The impact of intervention strategies on students' achievement and personal development is satisfactory.

- At Key Stage 4 standards are good and students make good progress. Standards at Key Stage 3 fell below the national average in 2007 and their progress is less marked.
- At Key Stage 3, those students targeted for intervention strategies make at least satisfactory progress.
- In the lessons observed, students' attitudes to learning varied from inadequate to good. In the intervention groups observed in Year 7 they were good: students' confidence and self esteem were high.

### Quality of teaching and learning in English

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

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good overall and planning is informed by clear learning objectives. Many teachers have good relationships with their classes.
- In lessons observed, many students enjoyed their learning and responded well: they worked collaboratively and were supportive of each other. However, in a small number of lessons, students were not engaged in learning and became disruptive.
- Students' progress is assessed regularly and monitored closely as part of whole school policy.
- The quality of marking and response to students' work is variable. In some cases it is good or outstanding. In other cases, marking lacks detail with limited guidance for improvement and little information about the standard at which students are working.

### Quality of curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum and the impact of intervention strategies on the curriculum are satisfactory.

- The curriculum strategy for English is satisfactory overall with some good aspects. Schemes of work, which are currently under review, do not define interventions for each year group.
- Careful thought is given to the grouping of students in mainstream classes and through a parallel intervention provision for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, the links between the planning and teaching of these two strands is not defined and liaison arrangements between different staff teaching the same children are not formalised.

### Leadership and management

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

- A new head of department was appointed in September 2007. Some new staff have limited knowledge of the National Strategy.
- The department action plan is satisfactory and identifies main issues for development, although success criteria are not always defined.
- There is a lack of consistency in expectations and ways of working, for example in the organisation and marking of students' work.
- Teaching and learning are monitored regularly through observations by senior leaders. However, the monitoring and evaluation of practice within the department are in development.
- The coordination of the various intervention strategies in English is underdeveloped.

### Intervention strategies

The impact of intervention strategies is satisfactory overall.

- The analysis of need is good, involving the analysis of a wide range of data.
- Intervention classes observed in Year 7 are good and improve students' achievement.
- Good and effective work is undertaken to ensure the engagement of parents and to support transition from primary schools.
- Currently the coordination and monitoring of intervention arrangements in both key stages are shared between a number of managers. It is not clear where the ultimate responsibility lies.

### The quality of programmes for disaffected students

The quality of programmes for disaffected students is satisfactory.

- There are preventative programmes at Key Stage 3 to engage students at risk of disaffection. These include the social inclusion room, the SEAL project, and activities such as Green Enterprise.
- At Key Stage 4, a number of alternative projects and programmes respond to needs, although not all courses are accredited.
- The monitoring and evaluation of these programmes, including those undertaken with partners, are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- establishing closer links between the provision in mainstream classes and intervention classes
- ensuring that all English staff receive relevant training, including where appropriate, familiarisation with the National Strategy
- strengthening the whole school approach to the alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4, including the accreditation of students' achievements
- strengthening the systems and procedures to monitor the outcome of specific initiatives.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English 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

Mary Ryan  
Her Majesty's Inspector