

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Ms T Hilton  
Headteacher  
Bill Quay Primary School  
Davidson Road  
Bill Quay  
Gateshead  
Tyne and Wear  
NE10 0UN

Dear Ms Hilton

Ofsted survey programme visit - National Strategies survey 2008-09

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 December 2008 to look at the impact of the National Strategies on raising standards and narrowing the attainment gap.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit focused on the work of the National Strategies in improving outcomes for children and young people. The visit focused particularly on the school's view of the impact of the National Strategies and how this is evaluated.

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 schools 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 outcomes of the visit included interviews with the headteacher, senior staff, teachers and a group of pupils. Parts of three lessons were observed and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Senior leaders consider that the National Strategy helps to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in school. A strand that has been particularly successful is 'Excellence and Enjoyment'. With the encouragement of the local authority, the school has designed a structure for ensuring that pupils can make progress in learning the skills of each subject through interesting cross-curricular topics. Other National Strategy strands that have a strong positive influence include phonics teaching, the use of assessment in lessons and for planning additional support, guided writing and the renewed literacy and numeracy frameworks. The impact of these strands is strengthened by the way they are adapted to meet the needs of the school. The staff value this approach and do not feel overburdened by "initiative

overload". While the school generally welcomes the renewed frameworks for their increased flexibility and improved assessment guidance, some threats to their positive impact have been identified; in particular, the website is difficult to use and there is insufficient opportunity for teachers to develop the required subject knowledge.

Lesson observations support your view that the National Strategy is having a strong influence on the quality of teaching and learning. In the lessons observed, there is an effective and consistent approach to using assessment to accelerate pupils' progress. The school has very clear records of pupils' progress and these are used effectively to plan additional support for pupils who could achieve more. Teachers are skilful in inspiring pupils to think of interesting ideas for their writing and in demonstrating how to present these ideas in a well-structured piece of work. Pupils enjoy learning phonics because lessons involve interesting practical activities that link new facts to what they already know.

The school's positive view of the influence of the National Strategy is supported by above average standards in Year 6 from 2005 to 2008. These standards represent good progress for the pupils, given that their skills and knowledge are broadly typical for their age when they start. Overall, lower attaining pupils make progress at a faster rate than other groups, and this is contributing to closing the attainment gap with the highest performing pupils.

I hope you find this feedback useful.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford  
Her Majesty's Inspector