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Mr R Foster
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Foster

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 10 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 includes observations of four parts of lessons and discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, teachers and a group of pupils. Relevant documentation and data were analysed.

Your view is that the National Strategy is helping you to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. This is largely because of the significant adaptations you have made to it in order to meet the needs of your pupils, many of whom are from an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. Influenced by "Excellence and Enjoyment" and supported by your local authority, you have re-designed your curriculum to enable pupils to develop their skills through interesting cross-curricular topics. You have used the greater flexibility afforded by the renewed literacy and numeracy frameworks to match teaching more closely to the learning needs and interests of your pupils. You have greatly extended the National Strategy

approach to planning additional support for underachieving groups, because the majority of your pupils need additional support.

Lesson observations support your view that your use of the National Strategy is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Mathematics lessons engage the enthusiastic involvement of all pupils because they are based on solving problems linked to pupils' everyday experiences or popular television programmes. Careful lesson planning ensures a systematic approach to teaching the mathematical skills needed to solve the problems. Classes are organised to ensure that the large proportion of pupils needing additional support receive this as an integral part of their broad and balanced curriculum. Phonics are taught effectively in these classes, ensuring that while pupils are learning to recognise new words quickly, they are also developing their skills in understanding what they are reading. You report how some of your staff have such well developed skills in meeting the needs of pupils with barriers to their learning, that you do not need to introduce the National Strategy's Inclusion Development Programme at this time.

Your positive view of the influence of the National Strategy is supported by the improving trend in standards from 2005 to 2008. Pupils start school with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. Their standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average at the end of Key Stage 1, although, by this time, pupils have developed a strong base of skills on which to build later learning. In 2007, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 rose to just above average in English, mathematics and science. The unvalidated 2008 results indicate that these gains have been sustained or further improved. An above-average proportion of pupils reached a higher level than that expected for their age in reading, mathematics and science; in writing, the proportion was similar to the national average. Overall, this represents very good progress for the pupils. Lower attaining pupils make progress at a faster rate than other groups in English and science, reflecting strengths in the school's arrangements for meeting their needs.

I hope you find this feedback useful.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector