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Mrs A Huthart
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Huthart

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 13 January 2009 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: discussions with the headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and pupils. Parts of three lessons were observed and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Senior leaders and teachers agree that the school's involvement in the National Strategy Hard to Shift and Intensifying Support programmes are making a sustained positive difference to pupils' progress in English and mathematics, especially in upper Key Stage 2. Implementing these programmes has been an important part of your work as headteacher since you were appointed. The support given to teachers and leaders by National Strategy consultants is highly valued by the school and judged to be having a very strong impact on the quality of teaching and learning. As a result of this support, teachers believe that there is much more effective analysis of pupils' progress data to inform planning and target setting. The headteacher judges that improved use of assessment underpins good and outstanding teaching in a minority of classes, however there is still much work to do before the same

impact is seen across the whole school. Securing consistency of effective practice in all classes is the main challenge for the school and its local authority partners.

Observations in three lessons support the school's self evaluation of variability between classes. Where teaching was most effective, there was clear evidence of teachers using assessment to plan work at the correct level of challenge for all groups of pupils. Pupils understood their targets and how these are helping them to achieving higher national curriculum levels. Teachers and teaching assistants were clear about which pupils need additional support and precisely what work needs to be planned for them. In other classes observed, there was less evidence of assessment being used to accelerate pupils' progress; teachers' questioning was not sufficiently adapted to meet the range of learning needs within the class and average and higher attaining pupils found the work unchallenging.

Achievement and standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are improving and the school judges that the National Strategy programmes have contributed to this. In 2007, standards were exceptionally low overall. The unvalidated results for 2008 show a considerable improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching age related expectations. The school's own data indicate that these gains are not only being sustained this year but, in addition, many more pupils are working at levels above age-related expectations. The improved results indicate that many lower attainers have been helped to catch up and "close the gap" with average and higher attainers. However, the school is still at an early stage in using a National Strategy approach to planning additional support for lower attaining pupils and those with a learning difficulty and/or disability. An outcome of the patchy impact of National Strategy programmes is that the school is slower in establishing improved performance at the end of Key Stage 1. Results fluctuate from year to year and, in 2008, they declined to an exceptionally low level.

I hope you find this feedback useful.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector