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Mr M Lawrence
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lawrence

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 14 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 interviews with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior staff and pupils. The inspector observed three part-lessons and scrutinised other relevant documentation.

Since your appointment as headteacher in January 2006, the school has been selective in its involvement in National Strategy programmes. For example, it has declined involvement in the Intensifying Support Programme judging that the programme lacked flexibility and consequently limited the autonomy of the newly established leadership team to raise achievement along the lines it felt best met the needs of their school.

However, the principles promoted by other strands of the Strategy are at the heart of the school's improvement work. Senior leaders particularly value the

impact Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning has had on pupils' attitudes and how their work with the Behaviour and Attendance team has helped vulnerable pupils and improved attendance. They also judge that the introduction of assessment for learning has been a highly effective strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. However, senior leaders acknowledge that there is little evidence yet to demonstrate the positive impact of assessment for learning on standards and achievement.

In the three lessons observed, there was some evidence that the Strategy is influencing classroom practice. Teachers use the renewed framework to plan their lessons to meet the full range of abilities, they share clear learning objectives and plan opportunities in lessons for pupils to work collaboratively. In one lesson, pupils evaluated how well they had achieved the lesson's success criteria. However, other key elements of assessment for learning were less evident. For example, pupils were not always clear of their learning targets and written responses in pupils' books were of limited value in helping the pupils know what they needed to do to improve their work.

Letters and Sounds have helped raise standards in reading by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the school recognises that its involvement in National Strategy programmes, including support from consultants, has yet to have a positive impact on the standards or achievement of older pupils during the period 2005 - 2008. Standards at Key Stage 1 have fallen. They are significantly low in writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 2, standards are average but the proportion of pupils making two levels progress is in the lowest quartile. The school's use of intervention programmes, such as Springboard and Additional Literacy Support, has not contributed to a narrowing of the attainment gap for some groups of pupils.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector