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Mr M Poole
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Poole

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 20 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 and senior staff, other teachers, a group of pupils and the assistant special needs coordinator. The inspectors observed part of three lessons and scrutinised relevant documentation.

Since your appointment as headteacher in January 2008, the school has embraced many of the principles promoted by the National Strategies. Some initiatives have been adopted whole-school while others have been tailored to meet the needs of individuals or groups of pupils. The strong leadership of the headteacher enables the school to pick specific strategies which sit under an umbrella of three main themes. These are: to improve the climate for learning, assessment for learning and talk for learning. Strands of the National Strategies underpin these themes where appropriate. The school considers that, for example, the social and emotional aspects of learning, assessment for learning, assessing pupil progress (APP) and elements of the intensive support programme have had the most impact on raising standards in the school. Rigorous tracking of individual and groups of pupils enables the

school to identify underachievement very quickly and personalised learning programmes are adopted to raise attainment. These include a wide range of initiatives, some of which are National Strategies but others are not. The school works closely with the local authority and uses consultant help for specific school led initiatives where necessary, for example, to train staff on APP. Senior leaders judge that this approach to using National Strategies material has already been successful in improving standards in both key stages.

In the three lessons observed pupils were well motivated and fully involved in their learning. Pupils of all ages were provided with opportunities to develop their speaking skills through talking with their peers about what they had learned. This is helping them to develop as independent learners. Good systems for learning were evident in all classrooms. Working walls and individual whiteboards were used well by teachers and pupils to focus their thoughts and to recap previous learning. Pupils told the inspector that lessons were much more fun and they now knew what they were learning and 'how to learn'. This is a big improvement on the findings from the inspection in January 2008 three weeks after the headteacher took up post. Planning from the new frameworks is adapted well to fit the main curriculum themes across the school and for mixed age classes. Teachers' planning for different groups of pupils is detailed and closely linked to APP assessments.

From 2005 to 2007 standards were below national average and achievement was erratic for different groups of pupils and across subjects. Standards are currently satisfactory and improving but achievement is good. This is as a direct result of the school's emphasis on personalised learning for underachieving pupils. Good impact has been seen in the school's work with traveller pupils where attendance has risen significantly due to more individual programmes of work which have improved pupils' enjoyment of school.

The school's own assessment information and the unvalidated 2008 test results show a significant increase in standards in all subjects. At both key stages standards are much closer to the national average, especially for higher attaining pupils. Reorganisation of the curriculum into a themed approach has had a positive impact on closing the gender gap with boys out performing girls in Key Stage 2 in 2008. The school is aware that many initiatives are in the early stages of development and need to be thoroughly embedded to ensure improvement is sustained.

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

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector