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Ms C Hughes
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Hughes

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 27 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, senior staff, teachers and other nominated staff and a group of students. Parts of three lessons were observed and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Senior leaders consider that they have been able to use a number of strands within the National Strategies to enhance their well established approaches to raising standards and promoting students' personal development and well-being. These include the effective use of data to target different types of support appropriately, the wide range of strategies used by teachers as part of assessment for learning and the support provided by teams of staff to promote students' social and emotional well-being. Senior and middle leaders evaluate rigorously the impact of a variety of strategies used to meet whole-school priorities. However, they acknowledge that it is difficult to separate the contribution of the wide range of strategies employed by the school to raise

standards further by increasing the proportion of teaching and learning that is outstanding.

On the visit, observations of three part-lessons highlighted the positive impact of the school's approach to improving the proportion of teaching and learning that is outstanding. Teachers used a wide range of imaginative activities that engaged students actively in their learning both in groups and independently. The skilful use of questioning to reinforce key learning points and to extend ideas was balanced with opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and to identify for themselves the next steps to improve their work further. Students appreciate the many strategies used by their teachers to make learning fun and to help them to achieve their best. They are clear about their targets in all subjects and feel able to use assessment criteria more confidently to measure their progress and to identify what they need to do to improve.

The school values the support of the school improvement partner and local authority consultants in helping to raise students' achievement further. Standards attained by students have remained consistently high over the last three years. Highly effective and well established strategies to support vulnerable students and those with additional learning needs has resulted in the school being identified as the lead practice school for social and emotional aspects of learning in the local authority. The school's detailed analysis of students' progress and individual needs enables the early identification of those who are at risk of underachievement so that support can be targeted appropriately. Consequently, the proportion of students attaining five good passes including English and mathematics rose to 67% in 2008 and all students attained at least five passes at A* to G for the second year. Students' progress in lessons is enhanced further as a result of the whole-school focus on increasing opportunities for independent learning.

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

Sara Morrissey
Her Majesty's Inspector