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Mrs I Maguire
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Maguire

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 05 February 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, associate headteacher, the special educational needs co-ordinator, teachers and two groups of pupils. The inspector observed three part-lessons and scrutinised relevant documentation.

The school reports that it works effectively with the local authority, is well supported by consultants and particularly values the work of the school improvement partner. The National Strategies' 'Improving Schools' programme is judged to have successfully focused the school on raising standards, particularly at Key Stage 2. This programme, alongside intervention strategies including literacy support and Springboard, has been adapted to meet the school's needs more closely. Other recently introduced strands from the National Strategies, including 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) and the Communication, Language and Literacy Development programme were considered to already be having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

In all lessons observed, pupils were well motivated and engaged positively in a range of activities, including practical tasks, partner and group work. Teachers made good use of pupils' prior learning and 'steps to success' to secure pupils' understanding. In two lessons, teaching assistants were actively deployed to promote class discussion. Meetings with pupils confirmed that they enjoy lessons with interesting activities which link new learning to what they already know. Observations support the school's view that AfL is positively influencing classroom practice.

Despite a decline in performance in 2007, the pattern of achievement between 2005 and 2008 indicates that standards overall are continuing to rise with improved attainment at expected and higher levels in all core subjects. This supports the school's view that the National Strategies have had a positive impact on standards at Key Stage 2, albeit they are below average. However, this is not the case in Key Stage 1, where standards are falling. Intervention programmes have however, narrowed the attainment gap at Key Stage 1 for pupils with additional educational needs.

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

Angela M Headon
Her Majesty's Inspector