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Mrs M Marshall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Marshall

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 10 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 discussions with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and four members of staff. Parts of three lessons were observed and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Senior leaders consider that National Strategies initiatives are central to their successful school improvement strategy. They can present evidence of a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They acknowledge the contribution of local authority support to this improvement, particularly the work of National Strategies consultants. Although this has required senior leaders to accept much external guidance, they say that they are confident in adapting the National Strategies' approaches to make them appropriate to the context of the school.

Senior leaders report that involvement in the Intensifying Support Programme has increased teachers' skills in using assessment to accelerate the progress

of all pupils. In addition, they have modified National Strategies guidance in developing an effective approach to planning support for lower attaining pupils and those with a learning difficulty and/or disability. They see this modification as necessary because pupils present a very wide range of needs. The additional support is a mixture of National Strategies programmes and other interventions that the school has found successful. To raise the achievement of all pupils, staff work hard to improve their personal, social and emotional development using approaches based on the National Strategies Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme. At the same time there has been a considerable amount of work with pupils and their parents to tackle poor attendance. As a result, attendance has improved considerably and it is now above the national average.

The three part-lessons observed provided evidence of the use of assessment information to plan lessons that provide good challenge for all pupils. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, a significant proportion of pupils were working hard towards objectives pitched at National Curriculum Level 5, which is above average for the age group. In a Year 3 and 4 reading group, lower attaining pupils were learning how to understand text as well as how to read words accurately because of the very good questioning skills of the teaching assistant. In a challenging game, children in Foundation Stage could use correct mathematical vocabulary to describe three-dimensional shapes. Pupils are helped to raise their achievement by having clear targets to aim for. Their progress towards these targets is frequently reviewed in discussions involving their parents. Examples of marking were seen which give pupils very clear information on how they can improve their achievement further.

The school is disappointed that improvements in teaching have not yet been reflected in rising standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. These were exceptionally low in 2007 and unvalidated data for 2008 show no improvement. However, the school's own data for 2008 indicate that, while a significant proportion of pupils did not attain the expected level for their age, the majority made at least satisfactory and often good progress from their very low starting points. This data also projects a substantial rise in the proportion of pupils who will reach the expected level in 2009. Support for lower attaining pupils is helping them to accelerate their progress and close the gap with national average standards. At the same time, the school is increasing the proportion of pupils who are working at higher than expected levels.

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