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Ms Marchant
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Marchant

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 11 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 senior leaders, subject leaders, the inclusion leader and a group of Year 6 pupils. I observed part of two lessons and made brief visits to two phonics sessions with the younger pupils. I scrutinised relevant documents.

Staff are generally positive about the impact of the changes to the literacy and numeracy frameworks, especially the increased flexibility. They consider that the materials are helpful in supporting their teaching, particularly in mathematics, but find the website difficult to use. Staff welcome the highly structured approach to the materials for teaching phonics. The school uses other materials to support the teaching of reading and writing, and so it is difficult to evaluate the impact made by specific initiatives. It is likely that the judicious use of a range of materials modified to meet the pupils' needs account for the school's success. The school trials strategies on a small scale to ensure they are effective before adopting them wholesale. Currently the school is embarking on work in Assessing Pupils Progress (APP) and anticipates that this will have a positive impact on teaching and learning. An

initial audit shows that many features of APP are already part of teachers' everyday practice. The school is reviewing its deployment of learning support assistants in providing structured intervention programmes for pupils withdrawn from class. After evaluating the success of such programmes, the school now uses the materials more selectively and tailors them to meet the needs of pupils within the classroom.

In the lessons observed pupils' good behaviour, positive attitudes, and enjoyment of learning were plainly evident. Well planned open-ended tasks supported a strong emphasis on collaborative work, on sharing ideas, and on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers used strategies such as talking partners and group tasks effectively to help pupils sustain a high level of involvement in activities. This made a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development as well as to their academic skills. Pupils from Year 6 know what they are doing well and what they have to improve; this gives them a strong sense of their own learning. Their targets are individualised because they are drawn directly from their work. The younger pupils responded positively to the varied methods used in their phonics sessions which involved a range of practical activities. They are making rapid progress and gaining confidence in using their phonic skills in writing.

The school receives the minimum allocation of support and intervention from consultants in the local authority because its pupils achieve relatively well. Standards of attainment are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average at the end of Key Stage 2. The proportion attaining Level 4 is high although only an average proportion of pupils attain the higher Level 5. Nonetheless, given pupils' starting points, they are making at least good progress over time, especially in English. Measures of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been high in the past. In 2005 and 2006, for example, the school was in the top 10% of schools nationally for contextual value added. The school's data show that it still faces a challenge to maintain standards and to increase the proportion of pupils attaining higher 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

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector