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Mr J Morgan  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Morgan

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 03 March 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 pupils. Parts of three lessons were observed and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Senior leaders report that participation in the National Strategies' Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) has contributed significantly to the improved performance of the school in recent years. They say that other contributory factors include greater stability in staffing and strengthening of leadership at all levels. The aspect of ISP that they judge to be particularly beneficial is the improved use of assessment data by the leadership team and teachers, especially in their regular pupil progress meetings. This has helped them to plan work that enables pupils to accelerate their progress, to check that pupils make good progress in each class and to provide effective additional support for pupils at risk of falling behind. Teachers also say that ISP has helped them to use discussion and self-assessment to improve pupils' learning during lessons.

Senior leaders acknowledge that National Strategies' consultants contribute significantly to the successful implementation of ISP approaches, particularly by empowering the leadership team to take responsibility for introducing and sustaining improvements in teaching and learning. Senior leaders also say that ISP on its own is not sufficient to improve the achievement of pupils. They also use a carefully planned approach to reducing the many social and emotional barriers to learning presented by the pupils. The National Strategies' Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme forms a part of this work. The headteacher feels that the school derived little benefit from participation in the National Strategies' Primary Leadership Programme because there was insufficient focus on the actions needed to improve pupils' achievement.

Lesson observations supported the view of senior leaders that ISP approaches are now embedded. In the three classes visited there was consistency in the teachers' planning to ensure that work was suitably challenging for all pupils. They used clear learning objectives as a basis for assessing pupils' progress and self-assessment as a means for helping pupils to understand how they could improve their work further. Pupils' skills in discussion and in explaining answers contributed to their good progress in lessons. In each class visited, pupils confidently pointed out anything that they did not understand and received helpful explanations from the teacher.

Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are below average, however pupils make good progress from their very low starting points. Achieving a sustained rising trend in standards has proved difficult in the context of above average proportions of pupils who arrive mid-year, who have a learning difficulty and/or disability or who have English as an additional language. However, the school's own assessment records show a consistency across all classes in the high proportion of pupils who make good progress. Senior leaders are quick to identify slowing of progress in any part of the school, and they take robust action to improve matters. The assessment data is also used very effectively for monitoring the progress of pupils who receive additional support. This shows that the majority of these pupils are making better than expected progress towards reaching the national average levels for their age. Senior leaders quickly identify any pupils for whom additional support is not accelerating progress and they adjust the support accordingly.

I hope you find this feedback useful.

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