

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs J Hannam
Headteacher
Parnwell Primary School
Saltersgate
Parnwell
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE1 4YH

Dear Mrs Hannam

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 leaders, the SENCO, teachers and a group of pupils. The inspector observed three part lessons and scrutinised relevant documentation.

Senior leaders consider that their four year involvement in the Intensive Support Programme (ISP) has had the biggest impact on the school's ability to track pupil progress. Teachers are confident in identifying underachievement. This has led to improved progress and standards as well as improved teaching and learning. The school has also adopted a range of other National Strategies' initiatives which are having an impact. The most noticeable are Assessment for Learning (AFL), Excellence and Enjoyment, Sounds and Letters and the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme (SEAL). Senior leaders agree that it is difficult to distinguish the impact of the National Strategies' interventions alongside other whole-school initiatives, published schemes to raise standards and other factors that affect

provision. Previous high levels of seclusion have been drastically reduced through the school's own ethos of zero tolerance to disruption in lessons and the whole-school implementation of the SEAL initiative. There is general agreement that training for implementing the revised literacy and numeracy frameworks and the introduction of letters and sounds across the school has had a positive impact on raising standards in writing. Intervention programmes in mathematics have not always had the impact intended and currently their use is being adapted and modified.

In the lessons observed teaching was of a high quality. National Strategies' principles were well embedded across all classrooms and teachers use good strategies to engage pupils in learning. The youngest children are confidently using their knowledge of letter sounds to write for themselves using capital letters and full stops, with good letter formation. In all lessons seen teachers had good subject knowledge, use questioning well to move learning forward and give very clear instructions so that all pupils know what they are going to learn. A strong feature across the school is the way teachers use 'working walls' as prompts for learning in lessons, and 'top tips' and 'literacy pirates' where pupils use talk very effectively to build upon each others ideas to improve their own work. Pupils talk confidently about their learning and what they need to do to improve and their own expectations of what they can achieve are high.

There has been slow improvement in reading and writing standards in Key Stage 1 from exceptionally low in 2006 to below average in 2008. Standards in English across Key Stage 2 have been rising year-on-year and are near to national averages. Progress measures between Key Stage 1 and 2 in English have also improved and contextual value added data for 2007 shows good progress especially in writing where the school has narrowed the gap between girls and boys. However, progress and standards in mathematics have not improved at the same rate and are more erratic. In Key Stage 2 mathematics standards have risen but progress has remained stubbornly satisfactory. The school is aware of this and senior leaders identified the wealth of available interventions for reading and writing and a lack of National Strategies' interventions for mathematics, many of which are outdated and have less impact. The school has had a high level of support from the local authority over a number of years but are now in a position to broker the support they need for themselves and are being more selective in the amount of support they use.

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

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector