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Mr R Duncan
Jack Hunt School
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Dear Mr Duncan

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, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, leaders of learning support and ethnic minority achievement, three teachers and a group of pupils. The inspector observed three part-lessons and scrutinised other relevant documentation.

The school has included many of the approaches promoted by the National Strategies in its school improvement work. The senior leadership team has good links with the local authority and works closely with the local strategy manager and consultants to tailor resources to meet the school's priorities. Through regular lesson observations, scrutiny of recorded work and evaluation of data, senior leaders judge that these resources, together with guidance from consultants, have been influential in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders recognise that it is difficult to disaggregate the impact of Strategies' programmes from other non-Strategies initiatives they have implemented. However, they judge that two programmes in particular have enhanced classroom practice - assessment for learning and information and communication technology across the curriculum. Despite these gains, school leaders recognise that whilst standards and achievement for lower

attaining students and some minority ethnic groups have improved, for most students the National Strategies have not led to consistently improving standards or achievement in recent years.

In three lessons observed during the visit, students were well motivated and clear about what they were learning and how to show evidence of this. In mixed ability groups, activities were carefully matched to meet the range of needs in the group. Teachers and support staff worked well together and ensured that all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participated actively. In a good mathematics lesson, there was a strong focus on understanding and the teacher expected students to explain their reasoning rather than simply share their methods or give answers.

Discussions with students indicated that many do understand the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to achieve the next level. This reflects well on the quality of dialogue between teachers and students. The quality of written responses in students' workbooks is often not so helpful. The students also confirmed that throughout the school day, they experience and enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively and take an active role in their learning.

Although overall standards have remained steady in recent years, the percentage of students achieving 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE rose in 2008 from 53% to 60%. The percentage of students achieving 5 A* - C grades including English and mathematics also increased and was equal to the national average. Attainment and achievement have been higher in English than in mathematics throughout the period 2006 -2008. There is some evidence that the actions taken by the school, including Strategies' programmes, have contributed to a narrowing of the attainment gap for some groups of pupils.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector