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Mrs Buttress
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Buttress

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 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 and senior leaders, inclusion manager, teachers, and a group of pupils. I observed four part-lessons, a reading recovery and a social skills session and scrutinised relevant documentation.

The headteacher and other staff value the contribution of the National Strategies to the school's own strategies for raising standards and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers and assistants value the national bank of high quality teaching resources and the good training and support from local authority consultants which the school uses to complement and extend other strategies and programmes which are already in place in the school. Teachers appreciate the support provided by the local authority and highlighted the usefulness of the subject leader meetings, the exemplar materials, and the support from the maths consultant in analysing pupils response to questions and in developing activities for mental maths. School and National Strategies' initiatives on phonics have had a significant impact on children's progress in reading and writing over the last two years. Teachers would like learning units to make the strategies for supporting

pupils with English as an additional language clearer and more accessible with more resources for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning.

The school values the inclusion development programme. The high priority given to inclusion is reflected in the thoroughness of the school's provision mapping which is based on regular assessment of pupil progress. A wide range of interventions are in place and have become more effective because they are more time limited and targeted more precisely at the wide and well-defined range of needs of specific individuals and groups. The impact of the phonics programme in improving levels of reading and writing is a result of the combined effect of the effective management of the phonics programme, the accuracy of the provision mapping and the quality of teaching. Good progress of pupils with low literacy is also supported by the recently introduced and effective reading recovery programme for individual pupils. The school also makes good provision for pupils with emotional social and behavioural difficulties in well run programmes for small groups led by teachers and learning assistants. The management of interventions is well-integrated into whole school approaches and all teaching and support staff take on responsibility for the additional challenge or support for individuals. The school leadership have developed effective systems for evaluating the impact of additional provision and are looking forward to doing this more rigorously using the new value for money tool to measure the outcomes of intervention against costs.

The lessons observed demonstrated good and outstanding features of teaching and learning. This supports the view that the National Strategies are being used to contribute effectively to the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment for learning is highly effective. Lesson planning is highly detailed with well expressed learning outcomes. Teachers structure lessons well with a clear focus on the learning objective. Teachers make good use of short activities to promote talk which enable pupils to express and develop their ideas. Pupils value the fact that they are actively involved in their own learning.

The school has in place a collaborative learning programme which is complemented by National Strategies' Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) activities; this has established a strong and effective culture of discussion and team work among pupils. It also successfully promotes good reflection and self evaluation by pupils in the classroom. The open and constructive dialogue between children and adults and positive attitudes to learning means that pupils are keen to learn and they help themselves and each other to make good progress. This was exemplified in the well structured plenary session in one class where pupils were precise and articulate about what they had learnt about mathematical co-ordinates and about the obstacles they had overcome. In other classes children worked both collaboratively and independently with high levels of concentration on number lines and sentence construction. Teachers lead lessons very well with clear guidance and precise interventions. They make good use of demonstrations,

pictures and culturally relevant stimulus material to stimulate engagement and understanding.

The pupils were very positive about the amount of active learning and the high levels of support from teachers. They value the comments they receive from other pupils about how they can improve as well as from teachers. They appreciate the additional practice in mental maths and booster classes that have been introduced to improve their progress in mathematics. They suggested that, in addition, they would like more introductory work on strategies and the language for maths topics before having to answer questions, and more help in class to help deal with confusions.

The school's effective implementation of school improvement strategies including the primary National Strategies is reflected in the usually above average progress made between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. Overall progress in relation to the school's context was significantly high in 2005 and 2006, average in 2007 and in 2008 it was again above average according to local authority analysis of the unvalidated data. Recently, pupils have made more rapid progress in English and science than in mathematics. Pupils, most of whom speak English as an additional language, enter the school with low levels of literacy. Standards are consistently well below average at Foundation Stage and achievement is satisfactory. Since 2006, by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils consistently reached average levels in reading writing, which was an improvement on previous years, though standards in mathematics which rose have since declined to below average. At Key Stage 2, from 2005 to 2007, pupils consistently reached average standards in English mathematics and science. In 2008 there was an increase in the Key Stage 2 results and the school gained its highest average point score, significantly above the national average.

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

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector