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Mr Visvanathan
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Dear Mr Visvanathan

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 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, subject leaders, teachers, and a group of pupils. The inspector observed five part-lessons, an intervention session and scrutinised relevant documentation.

The headteacher and other staff greatly value the contribution of the National Strategies to the school strategies for raising standards and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They make extensive use of the National Strategies written and web-based teaching resources. The school values the good quality training and advice from local authority consultants and benefit from the effective local authority support networks for schools. The school has improved the detail and precision of the school progress tracking system as a result of sustained involvement in the local authority's version of the national Intensive Support Programme. This has been used effectively by senior leaders to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of all

staff to better support the progress of pupils and to identify the additional language and learning needs of pupils more promptly. The leadership team have sharpened systems of performance management and school self evaluation so that all staff and managers explicitly and regularly review the impact of teaching on pupil achievement.

Subject leaders relatively new to their role have received very good induction and support from local authority consultants and often gain inspiration and direction from National Strategies training which makes a significant contribution to the well organised school professional development programme. Teachers acknowledge the significant impact of assessment for learning on teaching and learning. They value the increased accountability by all staff for the progress of children. They place high value on the Assessing Pupil Progress materials which are now being piloted in Key Stage 2 and have been extended to Key Stage 1. They welcome the less prescriptive nature of the renewed frameworks which provides more flexibility for personalising learning and provides an empowering framework for teachers to plan units of work. The web-based materials are accessible and give teachers considerable help in plotting progression. This is especially useful for teachers new to a year group.

The Letters and Sounds phonics programme has had a significant impact on children's progress in reading and writing over the last two years. It has increased the focus and pace in phonics lessons and provides a good resource of enjoyable, practical, visual and auditory activities. The development of listening skills for letter sounds, prior to reading and writing, has been especially useful for pupils with English as an additional language. The documentation about letters and sounds is very helpful to teaching and support staff in assessing stages of development and in targeting intervention.

Lesson observations confirmed that the effective use of the National Strategies to support learning ensured pupils made at least satisfactory and more often good progress. Assessment for learning in lessons is highly effective with well planned and systematic use of learning intentions, success criteria and peer assessment. Pupils of all ages demonstrated a good understanding of the vocabulary and practices for assessment. They value the methods for using red, amber and green markings for errors, lack of clarity in grammar and expression, and for meeting the learning intention. In the great majority of lessons teachers provided clear direction, well planned activities and good explanations, and they had a warm and positive relationship with the class. Pupils enjoy their lessons and concentrate well. Peer assessment was used very well to judge the progress and achievement in lessons

Pupils enjoy their lessons and were very positive about the amount and variety of active learning and the help they received from teachers. In particular, they like the range of ways that they and the teachers assess learning because they are effective in helping them to know how to improve. A whole-school programme is helping pupils to improve their writing by giving

them information and reminders about options to extend their vocabulary, openings, connectives and punctuation. Pupils in time-limited and purposeful intervention groups benefit from the extra adult time and support for aspects of their learning.

The school's effective implementation of assessment for learning and the primary national strategy for literacy and numeracy is reflected in the current satisfactory and improving progress pupils make at Fullwood. Since 2005 standards as measured by average points have been broadly average at all key stages, although in most years a higher than average proportion gained Level 4+ in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. Since 2005, pupils made the expected progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 except in 2006, when progress was less than expected in mathematics and science. The school has good evidence of improving progress in all year groups in 2009. The school has identified the need to reset targets and raise expectations of those that have already achieved their target level, in order to maximise achievement and raise standards.

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