

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr P Armstrong
Headteacher
Whickham Parochial Church of England Primary School
Broadway
Whickham
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE16 5QW

Dear Mr Armstrong

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 31 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 deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, teachers and two small groups of pupils. The inspector observed three part-lessons and scrutinised relevant documentation.

The school works very effectively with the local authority and school improvement partner. Support and advice offered by consultants is valued and reflects the school's context and specific requirements. Senior leaders have, over a number of years, used National Strategies' programmes, but these have been carefully tailored and adapted, as needed, within the school's overall improvement planning agenda. These key strands include the literacy, numeracy and Early Years Foundation Stage frameworks, assessment for learning, letters and sounds, social and emotional aspects of learning and intervention strategies.

Overall, the school reports that National Strategies' programmes, training and resources have supported the school's ongoing evaluation of its work. However, in light of the school's own successful initiatives and strategies, the school acknowledges that it is difficult to disaggregate and assess the impact of National Strategies' programmes on raising standards.

During the visit, observed classroom practice in all key stages provided evidence that assessment for learning is influencing the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers used pupils' prior learning, together with skilful questioning in all lessons to secure pupils' understanding. Pupils enjoyed their lessons and were fully engaged in a range of activities, including practical tasks and partner and group work. They confirmed that they understand learning objectives, success criteria and how to make good use of comments in their workbooks to improve further. Teachers and teaching assistants worked well together and ensured through individual and group support that all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, made good progress. Discussions with teachers indicated that they generally welcome the flexibility and, in particular, the resources provided by the new frameworks and also the assessment for learning programme.

The pattern of achievement between 2005 and 2008 indicates that standards overall have remained high with improving attainment at expected levels in all core subjects at Key Stage 2. Attainment at expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is also significantly above average at the end of Key Stage 1. However, although overall attainment at higher levels is well above average, there is an appropriate focus on securing an increase in the number of pupils attaining higher levels in writing in both key stages. Assessment for learning strategies are supporting the school's work in this area.

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

Angela M Headon
Her Majesty's Inspector