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Ms A Edkins
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Edkins

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 February 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 other senior staff. The inspector observed three part-lessons and scrutinised relevant documentation.

Since the appointment of a new acting headteacher in February 2008, the school has included many of the approaches promoted by the National Strategy in its school improvement work. The senior leadership team and teachers both agree that this has made practice much more consistent and raised expectations. The school works closely with the local authority to tailor strategy resources to meet its context and values the quality of the support it receives from consultants. Through regular lesson observations and evaluations of work in pupils' books, senior leaders judge that the use of these resources and guidance from consultants has already been influential in improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They particularly value part played by Assessing Pupils' Progress in supporting their drive to increase the school's effectiveness. However, they also acknowledge

that it is too early to demonstrate a significant impact on standards and achievement.

In the lessons observed during the visit, key principles of the Strategy were evident. For example, teachers are well aware that when focusing on improving writing, it is important to remember the interdependence of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Consequently, they recognise that speaking and listening, as well as being important skills in their own right, underpin reading and writing development. In English and mathematics lessons, there were generally precise success criteria and pupils were clear about the purpose of their activities. In mathematics, learning tasks made pupils reason about number and promoted collaborative working. When pupils offered answers or accounts, the teacher expected them to give full explanations of their ideas as well as their methods. Marking and the use of targets is not consistent across the school. However, there are examples of marking that provides a personal response to what pupils write. This marking helps to increase the pupils' confidence as writers, and clearly identifies specific areas for improvement.

Standards are below average overall. In 2008, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 improved and were close to average. However, the school's own data show that in many year groups significant proportions of pupils are working below age related expectations. Teacher Assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008, showed that attainment was particularly low in mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory. The school's use of intervention programmes, such as Springboard and Additional Literacy Support, has not yet 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