

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



27 February 2009

Mr Scutt
Headteacher
Light Hall School
Specialist Mathematics and Computing College
Hathaway Road
Solihull
West Midlands
B90 2PZ

Dear Mr Scutt

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 with Chris Constantine HMI on 10 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, deputy headteacher, other senior staff, teachers and students. Three part-lessons were observed. Relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Leaders and managers have a positive and constructive relationship with the local authority National Strategies team. They feel that in the past they have been overwhelmed by the large number of National Strategy initiatives and it has been the local authority working with the school that has enabled a coherent programme to be developed that meets the needs of their students. They feel that the Strategies have had a positive impact on students' achievement, particularly lower and middle ability students. However, the Strategies have had less impact on the achievement of more able students. The initiatives that are identified as having the greatest impact are the use of assessment to support and track learning, academic and pastoral

interventions to address the needs of underperforming students and materials and strategies to improve teaching and learning. The support and challenge of subject consultants is also seen as an important and effective aspect of the Strategies. However, the senior leadership team is unable to determine the relative impact of the National Strategies on raising students' achievement compared to other national school improvement initiatives. For example, the leadership team judge that specialist school initiatives and development work to better match the curriculum to individual students' needs have also had a positive impact on achievement.

The impact of the strategy on teaching and learning was evident in the lessons seen, although variation in practice was observed. Teachers share lesson objectives with students and this helps focus their learning. However, on some occasions lesson tasks rather than clear learning objectives are shared and these are less helpful. The three part lesson structure is routinely in place although on occasions the final plenary session can be too rushed. In all the lessons observed good use was made of digital projectors and interactive white boards to engage students, maintain pace and support learning. Lessons contained activities that actively involved students and their attitudes to learning and behaviour in all the lessons seen was good. Some effective questioning was used to check and develop learning. However, this was not consistently the case in all lessons. The students spoken to were aware of their targets and how well they were doing in relation to these targets.

Students enter the school with standards that are just above the national average. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average. The rate of improvement in the percentage of students attaining 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has been greater than that seen nationally over the past four years. However, the rate of improvement has slowed during the last two years. The inclusive nature of the school is evident in the fact that all students attained at least one GCSE or equivalent qualification in 2007 and 2008. The progress made by students as measured by contextual value added data is improving although there is some variation in the progress made between key stages, subjects and between different groups of students. For example the progress made by students is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. The progress of girls is also better than that of boys, with the lowest performing group being more able boys. The progress made by the small number of students from minority ethnic groups is similar to their peers.

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

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector