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Mr J Twort
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Dear Mr Twort

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Evaluation of the impact of the Primary National Strategy

I am grateful for the hospitality and co-operation of you and your staff, during my visit on 26 September 2006 to look at work in the Primary National Strategy (PNS).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the PNS, the visit had a particular focus on the quality of continuity and progression for pupils on entry to a new key stage.

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 institutions 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 judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness and impact of the PNS was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils enter the Nursery with standards well below expectations in most areas of learning, with particular weaknesses in communications, language and literacy.
- Although pupils make good progress throughout Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1, by the age of 7, attainment in reading and writing is

below that of the local authority (LA), and the national average. The trend has fallen in recent years.

- Standards in English rose significantly in 2006. They are now above those of the LA and the national average at Level 4+. Standards at Level 5 are similar to those in LA, but below the national average.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Strengths included detailed and well matched planning and clear lesson objectives. Purposeful starter activities, well managed learning and appropriate pace ensured that, in both the lessons during the visit, most pupils made good progress.
- Good improvements and developments in Assessment for Learning (AFL) have been introduced, including the use of a variety of questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding. Good use is made of strategies such as talk partners and working walls.
- The 'Profile Books' are a good assessment and tracking tool. These are used effectively to provide informative feedback to pupils which gives them a clear idea of progress and what they need to do further.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Staff use the PNS frameworks well to plan and meet the needs of pupils. The locality is increasingly being used to support learning, appropriately linking English to other subject areas. This is adding interest for pupils.
- The school's involvement in a LA music initiative is particularly effective in developing the music curriculum and introducing increased opportunities for performance at Key Stage 2.
- The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme, (SEAL) has had a positive impact throughout the school by developing whole school approaches to positive behaviour and effective learning.
- Good involvement with the Catholic partnership of schools has helped promote curriculum and professional development throughout the school well.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of the strategy are good.

- Appropriate PNS developments are implemented and their impact evaluated thoroughly. Clear monitoring and reviewing systems are in place for checking teaching and learning and the impact of recent

developments. In addition, staff analyse data and evaluate planning and pupils' work regularly. The outcomes are used effectively to amend planning, schemes of work, teaching approaches and pupil grouping.

- The quality of self evaluation is good. There is a clear vision for how aspects of the strategy will improve the school's provision and raise standards. This strong direction is reflected clearly in the school improvement plan.
- There are good opportunities for professional development and training. Regular, programmed staff meetings ensure consistent, whole school approaches.

The quality of transition

Processes for transfer and transition are satisfactory.

- Processes for identifying the educational and pastoral needs of pupils are shared effectively between staff.
- Systems for transferring personal records, particularly for those pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, are effective.
- Activities such as data analysis, pupil grouping and joint planning result in increased staff understanding of standards and expectations. For example Year 3 targets are based on Year 2 outcomes.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- The secure, caring learning environment, coupled with the high quality relationships, helps each and every child grow in confidence.
- Implementation of initiatives such as the Social Use of Language Programme (SULP) and structured peer tutoring have successfully increased pupils' confidence and self esteem.
- The needs of all pupils are met by sensitive and supportive staff. Accurate and regular assessment has ensured that pupils' progress is monitored closely and that those needing extra support, particularly in speaking and listening, reading and writing, are identified at an early stage.
- Good partnerships with parents have been developed, for example through Inspire workshops. These enable them to increase their understanding and support their children well in and out of school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to continue to provide opportunities for pupils throughout the school to speak and listen in a variety ways to increase their understanding and comprehension of the English language

- to raise writing standards throughout the school
- to ensure that the higher attaining pupils achieve the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the Primary National Strategy in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector