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Mrs Cohen
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cohen

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 14 January 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, senior staff, teachers and three groups of pupils. Parts of three lessons were observed and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Senior leaders consider that the National Strategy has helped to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in school in the last two years. Prior to that the National Strategy had little impact because of the major instability caused by staff changes. Almost all the staff in school are recent appointments. Teachers agree that the National Strategy programmes that have had the most impact are 'Letters and Sounds' and the work of the London Challenge consultants to improve teaching and learning in Year 6 by embedding the literacy framework into all lessons. The school welcomes the change in the relationship with the local authority consultants in recent years which mean that the work they now carry out is much more tailored to the needs of the school. School leaders recognise the value of the National Strategy to improve teaching and learning and to raise standards. However,

they recognise from experience that without strong leadership and a stable teaching team the impact of the National Strategy is not sustainable.

Lesson observations support the schools' view that the National Strategy is now having a strong influence on the quality of teaching and learning. In two of the lessons observed younger pupils demonstrated that their phonic skills were above average. This can be directly linked to the 'Letters and Sounds' programme. They were making very rapid progress in their reading and their writing. This work has raised the expectations of what pupils can achieve. As one teacher reported 'I have been humbled by the progress being made by these children'. Pupil's engagement in the activities was enthusiastic and lively. The boys in particular were making much more rapid progress than assessment information shows that those in previous year groups made. In another lesson, assessment information had been used well to pitch work at the correct level for most pupils. Consequently, pupils made good progress. Standards were below average however, because of past weaknesses in teaching. For example, some pupils did not have the phonic skills to decode words that much younger pupils were able to demonstrate.

The unvalidated results of the Key Stage 2 SATS in 2008 support the school's positive view of the recent impact of the National Strategy. A much greater proportion of Year 6 pupils achieved average and above average levels in English and science narrowing the gap between the school's standards and the average. These standards represent good progress for the pupils in Year 6 and can be directly linked to the considerable consultant support where they worked alongside the teachers. Standards at Key Stage 1 at the end of Year 2 were below average. However, school information shows that in the Reception classes and in the present Key Stage 1 classes, where 'Letters and Sounds' has had time to have the most impact, pupils are making rapid progress and standards in reading and writing are in line with national expectations.

I hope you find this feedback useful.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

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

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector