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Mr G Parsons
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Parsons

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: discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and pupils. Parts of three lessons were observed and relevant documentation was scrutinised.

It is the view of you as headteacher and senior leaders that the school improvement strategy which has made the greatest positive difference to pupils' achievement in recent years is a local authority (LA) improving schools initiative. They describe how the format of this initiative is similar to National Strategy targeted programmes such as the Hard to Shift and Intensifying Support programmes. All the staff interviewed agree that the LA initiative has helped them to improve lesson planning, to use assessment information more effectively and to provide a learning environment that gives pupils much useful guidance. Teachers say that there has been a very strong impact on the teaching of writing, which was a key priority for improvement. The headteacher described how participation in the National Strategy Primary

Leadership Programme strengthened the impact of the LA initiative. It helped him to establish an extended senior leadership team with the skills to embed improvements in teaching and learning across the school. He also pointed out the benefits of being part of a learning network of neighbouring schools. This was started as a National Strategy initiative, and it has been sustained with local funding because of the benefits gained from collaborative research and development. These include improvements in teaching mathematical problem solving and in meeting the needs of higher attainers.

Lesson observations supported teachers' views of the positive impact of the LA and National Strategy school improvement initiatives. Lessons were well planned and pupils were working hard to meet clear objectives that had been carefully adapted to match their needs. Teachers' expectations were high. Activities to prepare pupils for writing were stimulating and involved effective use of discussion and drama. Displays consisted largely of guidance to which pupils frequently referred, and when interviewed, a group of pupils talked about how useful this guidance was to them. They also talked about how much they learned from assessing their own work and from the guidance provided by teachers in marking. They particularly appreciated the "response to marking" opportunities when they could apply the teachers' guidance to their work.

Senior leaders judge that LA and National Strategy school improvement initiatives have contributed to an improving trend in achievement at the end of Key Stage 2. Published results from national tests and assessments between 2005 and 2007 support this judgement, even though standards were still below average in 2007. Unvalidated results for 2008 show that the overall trend of improvement is being sustained. In particular, there is a marked improvement in standards in writing and, in all subjects, there is a notable increase in the proportion of pupils attaining a higher level than that expected for their age. The same improving trend is not yet seen at the end of Key Stage 1. Results fluctuate from year to year and they declined to below average in 2008, which the school partly attributes to increasing rigour in teachers' assessment. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the majority of lower attaining pupils who receive additional support are making accelerated progress and closing the gap on other pupils. The support programmes that make the greatest positive difference to their achievement are outside the National Strategy.

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

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector