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Mrs B Dunn
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dunn

Ofsted 2010–2011 survey inspection programme: assessing pupils' progress (APP)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 29 September 2010 to evaluate the impact of the APP initiative.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: scrutiny of documentation; observations of teaching and learning; discussions with senior leaders, a representative from the local authority, other staff and pupils.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is good.

The APP initiative

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- The increased accuracy of teachers' assessment and their deeper understanding of progression are contributing to improving pupils' achievement. Attainment in mathematics has risen considerably since the school's institutional inspection in 2008 narrowing the gap between English and mathematics. Provisional results for 2010 indicate that attainment in both English and mathematics is now broadly average.
- APP has improved the rigour of target-setting at pupil, class and whole-school level. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to strengthen the impact of pupils' subject-specific targets when expected timescales are not set out clearly.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, benefit from their very precise understanding of their short-term targets in lessons. This is supplemented by effective marking in pupils' books. These strategies enable pupils to articulate consistently what they need to do to raise their attainment. Their understanding of how their personal targets equate to National Curriculum levels is less well developed.
- Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to assess their own work against clear APP success criteria.
- APP is used very well to identify gaps in pupils' learning so that interventions can be tailored carefully to meet individual needs. Intervention strategies are improving the achievement of groups who have previously achieved less well, particularly boys of Black African and Black Caribbean heritage.

Impact on the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to support learning

- APP has improved the quality and accuracy of information shared by teachers at key transition points. As a result, class teachers have a much clearer understanding of pupils' prior attainment at the start of each year.
- Teaching benefits from the comprehensive systems for moderating assessment that are supported effectively by the local authority. Teachers are now able to make accurate judgements about pupils' progress and have begun to share their expertise with colleagues from other schools.
- The link between assessment and planning has been strengthened by APP. However, while practice is good, not all teachers are equally effective in using detailed assessment information to plan lessons that fully meet the needs of all pupils.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP has enabled the school to identify and address gaps in the curriculum provision. For example, the school introduced a 'problem-solving Friday' having identified through APP that pupils were achieving less well in this area of mathematics.
- APP has supported the development of a curriculum that is more responsive to pupils' individual needs.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- sharing the best practice in the use of assessment so that learning activities consistently meet the needs of all groups of pupils
- strengthening the impact of pupils' subject-specific targets by indicating the expected timeframe in which they should be achieved

- deepening pupils' understanding of how their personal targets link to National Curriculum levels.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop assessment practice in support of school improvement.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector