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Mr M Lothian
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lothian

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 21 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, other staff and pupils and a representative from the local authority.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory.

The APP initiative

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- APP is beginning to have a positive impact on achievement. Standards have risen since the school's institutional inspection in 2009, particularly in English. Pupils' progress is tracked well and the information gathered is used to ensure they are given effective support where necessary.
- APP has improved the rigour of target setting. This is now consistent throughout the school. Pupils are not yet involved in the process of setting their own targets for improvement.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- APP criteria are enabling teachers to examine pupils' acquisition of subject skills more precisely. Teachers are becoming more skilled in using the criteria to identify gaps in the learning of individual pupils or groups and adapt interventions to tackle them.

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

- Increased training opportunities have resulted in improved rigour in monitoring teaching and learning and following up any issues arising from direct observation and analysis of performance data.
- APP is helping to drive effective action to improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment. However, some inconsistencies remain. Expertise in matching learning objectives and activities to pupils' needs has not yet been fully shared. Some teachers have a tendency to work through the prescribed lesson plan rather than adapt it or alter the pace of learning to maximise pupils' progress.
- As a result of using APP, teachers are more focused on pupils' ability to evaluate their own work; this is evident in some lessons but it is more consistent in workbooks where pupils comment on their understanding and also respond to teachers' comments.
- Pupils' progress is evaluated in relation to the learning objectives for each lesson. Most pupils use their individual targets well to establish what they are able to do and what they need to do next.
- The feedback and marking policy is embedded and used effectively. Pupils understand the systems and are given time to reflect on their learning.
- The impact of teaching assistants' interventions to support pupils' learning is variable. This is mainly due to missed opportunities for training and a lack of guidance about the purpose of learning activities.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP has encouraged the school to review and further develop the curriculum to make it more interesting and relevant with stronger links between subjects.
- Through their use of APP, teachers have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. Consequently, the curriculum is more tailored to pupils' needs enhancing their enjoyment of learning.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- involving pupils in setting their own targets for improvement

- extending professional development opportunities for teaching assistants to engage more deeply with the principles of effective assessment practice.

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

As I 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

**Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector**