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Mrs V Eggleton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Eggleton

Ofsted 2010–11 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 7 October 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; and 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.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- The use of APP criteria contributed to improved attainment at the higher levels in English and mathematics in 2010.
- APP is helping to identify gaps in the learning of lower-attaining pupils and target support to tackle them. Consequently, these pupils are now making better progress.
- The improvement in teachers' understanding of assessment criteria, and clearer feedback in marking, is accelerating pupils' achievement in writing.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- The use of APP assessments is developing teachers' understanding of progression so that, when necessary, they revisit topics and introduce new learning opportunities to consolidate pupils' learning.
- APP, and linked materials, help teachers to understand more clearly what pupils can do and what they need to learn to move to the next level. However, opportunities for pupils to be involved in peer- and self-assessment are limited.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are benefiting from teachers' use of APP criteria because interventions to support their learning are targeted more precisely.
- As a result of using APP, teachers are improving the quality and frequency of discussions with pupils about their work. This is improving pupils' engagement with learning. Discussions do not yet include what helps pupils to learn best, so opportunities are missed for pupils to contribute to developing the curriculum.

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

- APP is helping teachers to evaluate progress during lessons so that they can adjust their teaching to raise, maintain or lower the level of challenge.
- The use of APP is encouraging a dialogue between teachers about assessment practice and improving their understanding of how to accelerate pupils' progress. A shared language for assessment is beginning to develop, with more work to do.
- Teachers are gaining confidence in using APP; recent steps to develop a clearer and more pupil-friendly language to discuss assessments is supporting discussions about learning with, and between, pupils.
- Teachers find moderation of assessment across parallel classes helpful and are keen to benefit from wider collaboration so that they can strengthen their understanding of what learning at different levels looks like.

Impact on the curriculum

- The use of APP is beginning to improve teachers' subject knowledge so that they plan better opportunities for pupils to practise skills and apply their understanding.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- improving the accuracy of assessments across all core subject areas
- developing teachers' understanding of the link between assessment, accurate target-setting and improving pupils' progress
- increasing opportunities for pupils to assess their own and others' work, and express what helps them to learn best.

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

Nell Banfield
Additional Inspector