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Mr N Hookway  
Headteacher  
Highwoods Community Primary School  
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CO4 9SN

Dear Mr Hookway

**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, and discussions with senior leaders, other staff, pupils, and a representative from the local authority.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is good.

**The APP initiative**

**Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment**

- Teachers' increased accuracy in assessing the level of pupils' work and identifying the next steps they need to take are raising achievement and attainment. Information passed to a pupil's next teacher is leading to better achievement immediately after transition to a new class.
- APP has improved the rigour of target-setting for pupils and the promptness of changing targets that have been met.

- Data, that the school uses to evaluate achievement across year groups, do not always take sufficient account of differences in pupils' prior attainment.

### **Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress**

- Teachers are using the assessment information provided by APP to set work that matches pupils' needs better and enables them to learn more effectively. However, there are occasions when work in mathematics is too easy for some pupils.
- Pupils are aware of the learning objectives and their targets in literacy, and help to generate success criteria. They use a range of methods to assess whether they have met them. In this way, APP helps pupils to know how to improve their work, which they constantly strive to do. In mathematics, these skills are developed less well.
- Areas of weakness identified through APP have informed well-focused support in lessons and interventions that have improved learning, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- By providing teachers with a clearer understanding of progression and improving their subject knowledge, APP has helped them structure pupils' learning more effectively and share next steps with pupils and their parents.

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

- Teachers' confidence and accuracy when assessing has grown through the use of APP and moderation. They have moved away from relying solely on tests and use a wide range of evidence to support their judgements.
- The use of APP has increased teachers' flexibility and their responsiveness to pupils' needs. They focus on identifying where pupils are stuck and how to move them on; they no longer adhere to a planned activity that pupils find too easy or hard.
- APP has promoted professional discussion and shared understanding about effective teaching and raising pupils' progress. Teachers are much more open in sharing their assessments of pupils' work and justifying their judgements.
- During lessons, teachers monitor pupils' progress well and, particularly in English, encourage them to improve the quality of their work against clear criteria and targets.

### **Impact on the curriculum**

- APP has prompted teachers to plan lessons specifically to provide opportunities for all pupils to demonstrate understanding and evidence of progress. This approach is spreading across the curriculum and is most fully developed in English.

- APP is informing interventions to address the gaps identified in the achievement of different groups. Through highlighting some curriculum areas where attainment was generally weaker, for example, in aspects of reading, it has contributed to new approaches to teaching.

**Areas for development, which we discussed, include:**

- extending the successful use of assessment opportunities in English lessons, particularly to mathematics
- using analysis of the pupils' prior attainment to inform evaluation of teaching and learning.

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

**Gill Close**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**