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Mrs M Rannard
Headteacher
West Derby School
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Dear Mrs Rannard

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 28 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, students and a representative from the local authority.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is outstanding.

The APP initiative

Impact on students' achievement and attainment

- APP is accelerating students' progress in the targeted subjects with clear evidence of improved attainment at both key stages.
- No groups of students underachieve and the outcomes for most groups exceed expectations significantly.

Impact on the quality of students' learning and progress

- APP is improving students' acquisition of knowledge and understanding by enabling them to see clearly where their strengths lie and where they need to improve. This gives them confidence and greater resilience when tackling challenging activities.

- Students take responsibility for their learning and have many opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work; they do both skilfully because of the good practice modelled by their teachers.
- As a result of excellent assessment activities within lessons, students have a sophisticated understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to progress.

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

- Extensive and detailed tracking ensures that teachers are fully aware of students' capabilities and prior learning; they use this information very effectively in planning to meet the individual needs of students.
- Lessons are challenging and inspiring; learning objectives are clear and accessible to students. Teachers use a wide range of methods to ascertain levels of understanding during lessons. Marking is effective; students say that teachers' comments are very helpful with clear explanations and examples of how to improve.
- Dialogue with parents through letters, telephone calls and meetings helps to keep students on track. Any slippage in their grades or attitudes to learning is identified quickly and remedial actions, such as one-to-one sessions and extra classes during the holidays, are put in place.

Impact on the curriculum

- Schemes of work within the English and mathematics departments and alternative curriculum pathways for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are evaluated and revised regularly to ensure that they meet students' needs. In this context, APP criteria are a useful point of reference.

Areas for development

- Appropriate priorities for development are already outlined in the school's robust and comprehensive improvement plan.

I hope 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

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector