

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



8 October 2010

Mrs C Spillane
Headteacher
Calder High School, A Specialist Technology College
Brier Hey Lane
Mytholmroyd
Hebden Bridge
HX7 5QN

Dear Mrs Spillane

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; and discussions with senior leaders, other staff and students, and with a representative from the local authority.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory.

The APP initiative

Impact on students' achievement and attainment

- Teachers' increasing accuracy of assessments and their developing understanding of progression are helping to improve the attainment of the majority of students. Although most are making better progress, some groups' progress is slower.
- APP is contributing to rigour in target-setting. Although students are more aware of short-term targets and how these lead to longer-term success and progress, not all have individualised subject-specific targets.

Impact on the quality of students' learning and progress

- APP criteria are used with increasing confidence to identify gaps in students' learning so that interventions and learning opportunities can be tailored to their needs.
- APP is helping to improve teacher's understanding of progression. Consequently, they are more able to clarify the component skills and understanding that add up to successful learning for students.
- As a result of using APP, teachers are focusing increasingly on students' ability to evaluate their own and each other's work. Students have good access to clear success criteria in lessons to help them assess the quality of their work and strive to reach the next stage of learning.

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

- Teachers are gaining expertise in using assessment information to plan learning that builds on students' capabilities and understanding. However, this is not yet accelerating the progress of all students because practice is inconsistent.
- Teachers' marking indicates clearly what students need to do to improve. APP is increasing the precision of teachers' written comments and evidently most students are responding to this clearer guidance.
- APP has instigated valuable professional dialogue within subjects. However, a shared language for assessment to support cross-phase and cross-subject discussion of students' learning is not in place yet.

Impact on the curriculum

- A developing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in students' learning is helping teachers to tailor the curriculum and increase students' engagement with learning.
- APP is helping teachers to map assessment opportunities across curriculum areas and embed them in teaching and learning.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- planning lessons that build on students' prior learning systematically
- using assessment information to set all students subject-specific targets.

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