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Mrs H Mulholland
Headteacher
Castle Hill Primary School
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Todmorden
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Dear Mrs Mulholland

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 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, staff and 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

- APP has made some contribution to improving pupils' achievement. In particular, the school considers that the APP materials have helped raise attainment in mathematics. Teachers say that APP has developed their subject knowledge and confidence in teaching mathematics. The school's most recent assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 attaining both the expected and higher levels in mathematics exceeded targets agreed with the local authority. Compared with 2009, this reflects a stronger performance.

- The impact of the school's system for tracking progress is demonstrated through timely intervention at individual and group level to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- Use of the APP framework has ensured continuity in tracking pupils' acquisition of skills and knowledge as they move between classes and Key Stages 1 and 2. Consequently, any gaps in learning at these transition points are identified quickly.
- Curricular targets, informed by APP, are shared with pupils. Teachers have devised child-friendly versions of level descriptors to make them accessible to pupils. In discussion, pupils from different year groups demonstrated a sound understanding of how targets helped them to make progress. They confidently explained the different sorts of feedback teachers provide to help them improve their work.

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

- A strong collaborative culture among staff helps the school to get the most from the APP strategy to systematise assessment to support learning.
- Senior leaders and the local authority have been careful to ensure manageability for teachers. For example, a measured approach has been taken to recording the evidence that supports teachers' assessments.
- Teachers use the assessment guidelines and regular moderation by key stage teams to help them make secure judgements against national standards. School leaders and teachers consider that the APP initiative has made a valuable contribution to their professional dialogue about the use of assessment and other strategies to support learning.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP has had impact on curriculum delivery rather than curriculum development. It has supported teachers' planning for learning and the security of their assessment judgements in literacy and mathematics. The developing creative curriculum and recent work to improve pupils' skills in investigative science are derived from initiatives generated by the school.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring APP is used to set challenging targets, particularly for the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in core subjects.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop partnerships 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

Cathryn Kirby
Her Majesty's Inspector