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Mrs J Woolley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woolley

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 13 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

- APP has provided a framework for identifying the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. Senior managers have recently improved the rigour and accuracy of assessment. This has revealed that some groups of pupils are underachieving, especially in writing.
- Teachers' use of APP is not accurate enough to provide reliable information. The pace of learning in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4 has been slower than in Years 5 and 6. Pupils who are capable of attaining the higher levels in English and mathematics do not have long enough to make up lost ground. Consequently, although attainment overall is above average, progress is satisfactory.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- APP is beginning to help teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning and devise better classroom activities to support their progress.
- APP has encouraged the school to begin to share pupils' learning targets with parents to provide more detailed information about their children's achievement.

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

- APP has enabled regular opportunities for moderation to take place. While considerably more work needs to be done, this is helping teachers to assess more accurately and develop their understanding of progression.
- At the start of lessons, most teachers use success criteria to give pupils a clear idea of what they are aiming to achieve. However, these criteria are not always matched with learning activities that support pupils' different needs.
- Not all teachers take pupils' capabilities and prior learning into account when planning lessons. As a result, pupils are not always given clear feedback about their next step in learning.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP has prompted the school to review pupils' progress and attainment regularly. However, not all teachers use the information collected well to tailor the curriculum to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils.
- Pupils' writing is being assessed in subjects other than literacy, but a systematic approach has not been developed across the school.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring all teachers plan learning activities that meet pupils' different needs and capabilities
- providing pupils with feedback about their next step in learning in lessons
- developing a consistent approach to assess writing across the curriculum.

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

John Seal
Her Majesty's Inspector