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Mrs A Woolmer
Headteacher
John Bunyan Junior School
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Dear Mrs Woolmer

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 inadequate.

The APP initiative

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- The positive impact of the school's efforts to improve assessment practice through the adoption of APP was not evident in the national tests in 2010.
- APP has contributed to the development of a systematic approach to record-keeping and analysing performance data for individual pupils, classes and year groups. These processes have the capacity to support your drive to improve the use of assessment to support learning.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- Some teaching is adapted imaginatively to the more detailed information about pupils' capabilities, provided by APP. There are indications that APP practice is beginning to have a positive impact in some classrooms, resulting in securely satisfactory progress. However, this is not consistent in all classrooms across the school.
- Links with the local infant school are good and developing to manage the flow of information about pupils' attainment and well-being as they move into Year 3. However, there are virtually no transition links with local secondary schools.

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

- APP has helped to clarify learning objectives in lessons. Most pupils understand how they, and the success criteria that usually accompany them, support their learning.
- Marking is thorough, useful and appreciated by pupils.
- Pupils know their current attainment levels in mathematics, and reading and writing, although they are not always clear about the precise ways of achieving the next step in learning.
- The disparities between teachers' assessments and test outcomes at the end of last year indicate that the use of APP to make accurate judgements about pupils' attainment is not yet adequately embedded.
- Coordinators work to ensure that judgements about pupils' attainment are consistent. However, their work is not driven strongly enough by a knowledge of the day-to-day classroom-based assessment practice of teachers. Consequently, APP information is not influencing teaching practice in a positive and coherent way.
- Parents' involvement as a resource to support learning is underdeveloped. APP information is not shared with parents and this makes it more difficult to establish a dialogue about children's learning. You are aware of this, and have begun to tackle the issue.

Impact on the curriculum

- Intervention groups in reading, writing and mathematics support pupils whose progress is slower than that of their peers. Interventions are shaped by knowledge about the gaps in pupils' understanding and skills highlighted by APP. At present, there is no mechanism in place to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- improving the consistency and accuracy of teachers' assessments

- identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding earlier, and providing systematic, prompt and effective interventions to support their learning
- ensuring the consistent application of agreed assessment strategies through thorough monitoring and evaluation
- strengthening accountability for pupils' progress by extending subject coordinators' influence and authority
- establishing links with local secondary schools, and passing on good quality information about pupils' knowledge, understanding and skill development, especially in mathematics and English.

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

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector