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Mr J Coles
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Coles

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 7 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 good.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- The increased accuracy of teachers' assessment and their deeper understanding of progression are contributing to a more focused dialogue with pupils about their improvement. Consequently, pupils' good rate of progress is being maintained.
- APP has improved the rigour of target-setting at pupil, class and whole-school level. Targets for pupils are more sharply focused in each subject, offer appropriate challenge and enable pupils to play a greater role in planning and evaluating their own progress.
- APP is used well to identify gaps in pupils' learning so that interventions can be carefully tailored to meet individual needs. Opportunities are sometimes missed to strengthen the impact of this provision when it is not

adjusted quickly enough in response to the school's monitoring information.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- APP is helping to improve the learning of, and support for, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and vulnerable groups. Teachers and teaching assistants plan well together to ensure that lesson activities are specifically designed to promote inclusion and meet individual needs.
- As a result of using APP, pupils are given frequent opportunities to revisit and respond to written feedback. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing, how they can improve and what improvement will look like.
- APP is enabling pupils to develop confidence as learners and play a greater role in shaping the direction of learning in lessons. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to create success criteria and apply these measures to assess their own and the progress of others.

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

- APP has encouraged teachers to re-design their approach to planning. As a result, pupils' learning experiences are more sharply focused on accelerating their progress through a range of assessment opportunities.
- APP has improved the consistency and accuracy of information shared by teachers at key transition points; class teachers have a much better understanding of pupils' prior attainment at the start of each year.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is developing well as a result of their engagement with APP. In lessons, questioning is used well to probe understanding, re-shape activities where necessary and extend pupils' thinking.
- APP has significantly improved the standardisation and moderation of assessment within the school but formal opportunities for teachers to share and develop their expertise with colleagues from other schools are limited.

Impact on the curriculum

- The principles of APP and assessment to support learning are a core feature of the school's work to develop a curriculum that is more responsive to pupils' individual needs.
- APP is helping teachers to create and map a range of assessment opportunities across the curriculum. This work is supported well by the local authority and through the good continuing professional development programme that exists for all staff.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring the timely adjustment of interventions to support learning to maximise their impact
- providing regular opportunities for teachers to share expertise and evaluate pupils' work with colleagues from other schools.

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

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector