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10 November 2010

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Headteacher
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Dear Mr Caplen

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 3 November 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; observation 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

- APP is beginning to have a positive impact on achievement. Pupils' attainment has risen since the school's institutional inspection in 2009, particularly in mathematics. This is mainly the result of the increased accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessment and their improved understanding of progression.
- APP has supported consistency in target-setting, especially in Key Stage 2. The school is focusing appropriately on the progress of different groups of pupils including those who have been underachieving.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- APP criteria are used effectively to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Any pupil who is not performing well is given appropriate support through a range of intervention strategies. Consequently, most pupils are making good progress.
- APP is helping to improve teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects where it is being implemented. Teachers report they have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. Pupils are benefiting from this, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' progress is evaluated in relation to the learning objectives for each lesson. Most pupils use their individual targets well to establish what they are able to do and what they need to do next. In addition, pupils are given opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work. The school recognises that this is helping to clarify success criteria for pupils and develop their understanding of what they need to do to further improve their work.

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

- Senior leaders believe that APP has contributed significantly to the professional dialogue in the school. In particular, it has cultivated a collective responsibility and accountability for pupils' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to maximise the progress of all pupils.
- Teachers have developed a shared language for assessment which is helping cross-phase discussions of pupils' progress. This is helping to ensure continuity in their learning and progress.
- APP has helped teachers to gain confidence and expertise in assessing pupils and is helping to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers are more aware of pupils' capabilities and prior learning. They are using this information to tailor learning activities to the needs of individuals. However, some inconsistencies remain. Some teachers have a tendency to work through the prescribed lesson plan rather than adapt it or alter the pace of learning. Pupils report work is sometimes 'too easy'.
- The feedback and marking policy is embedded and used effectively. Pupils understand the systems and are given time to reflect on their learning. The best practice clarifies what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve further.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP has encouraged the school to review the curriculum further to make it more interesting and relevant with stronger links between subjects.
- Teachers have become more confident in personalising the curriculum as they have gained greater understanding of pupils' individual needs through

APP. Consequently, pupils enjoy their learning and are motivated to do well.

- APP has assisted teachers in creating a good range of assessment opportunities that is embedded in the curriculum. Teachers report that training instigated by the local authority has been particularly beneficial in using APP materials.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- making effective use of assessment to plan consistently challenging work in every lesson for all groups of pupils.

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

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector