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3 December 2010

Ms J Freeman
The Acting Headteacher
Mercenfeld Primary School
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Dear Ms Freeman

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 23 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; observations of teaching and learning; 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

- The increased accuracy of teachers' assessment, supported by APP criteria, is contributing satisfactorily to raising pupils' attainment and achievement.
- APP promotes the identification of learning targets that keep pupils focused on their next steps in learning, especially in the context of improving their writing skills.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- The school's improving use of APP criteria is strengthening systems for tracking pupils' progress, identifying gaps in learning and tackling underachievement through suitable interventions. The support provided

for individual pupils through the tutor programme contributes well to pupils' progress over time.

- Pupils have sound opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work, particularly in Key Stage 2. APP is helping to clarify success criteria for pupils and develop their understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- APP is helping to support the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, thereby promoting their inclusion in lesson activities.

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

- APP is improving teachers' subject knowledge and enabling them to focus more sharply on developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The link between assessment and planning has been strengthened by APP. This is evident in a closer match between learning objectives and pupils' needs.
- APP is helping teachers to have a constructive dialogue about pupils' progress and attainment within their teaching groups. Teachers' understanding about pupils' attainment and progress across the key stages is underdeveloped.
- Sessions to moderate teachers' assessment are developing consistency and confidence in assessment practice. The school is keen to extend the use of sharply defined targets for learning in lessons and to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills further across a wider range of subjects.
- The use of assessment by teachers in lessons varies. There is some effective reference to learning objectives, success criteria and targets during lessons to check pupils' progress, but this is inconsistent.
- The quality of teachers' marking is improving. APP is increasing the precision of teachers' written comments and there is a sharper definition of the next steps in learning.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP is promoting a curriculum that is increasingly personalised to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and are motivated to do their best.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- improving teachers' use of success criteria and targets to check pupils' progress in lessons
- maximising opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills to help raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector