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Ms Russen
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Russen

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 16 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 and pupils, and the local authority officer.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is good.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- Pupils' attainment has improved significantly in the last year in English at Level 4. The increased accuracy of teachers' assessments has contributed to raising pupils' achievement. This includes pupils assessed with autism and those who are bilingual. Pupils' attainment at the higher levels is not yet in line with school targets.
- Although APP has only been fully implemented in English, this has had an impact on improving the rigour of monitoring pupils' progress and target setting at a whole-school level.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- The school is using APP criteria well to identify strengths and gaps in pupils' learning in English. Teachers, together with learning support assistants, are increasingly using this assessment information to plan

lessons and tailor interventions that help pupils to make greater progress. The precision of the information enables teachers to give pupils specific feedback on what they need to do to improve.

- In English, APP is helping to improve teachers' subject knowledge and skills. As a result, both formative and summative assessments are marked with greater accuracy and teachers clarify the component skills and understanding that pupils need to master the subject. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language, can articulate the strengths and gaps in their skills effectively.
- As a result of using APP, teachers ensure that pupils understand the success criteria in English lessons. This helps them to evaluate the quality of their own work and assess that of other pupils, thereby increasing their understanding of how they can improve their work.

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

- APP has had a positive impact on the consistency of assessment across the school. This has encouraged the school to share pupils' learning targets with parents through after-school workshops; especially those parents who are bilingual and are not familiar with the English educational system. Consequently, parents are able to support their children's learning more effectively.
- APP encourages cross-phase discussions of pupils' learning to support their progress through points of transition. This work is still developing and, along with the need to embed APP in mathematics, is included in the current priorities for the school.
- APP level descriptors have increased English teachers' and senior leaders' confidence in moderating judgements about the quality of pupils' work. Collaborative practice and thorough professional dialogue have been fostered by the common language for assessment provided by APP.
- APP has reinforced a collective accountability for pupils' progress in English. Teachers and learning support assistants have gained greater expertise in using assessment information and planning learning that builds on pupils' capabilities and understanding.

Impact on the curriculum

- Teachers have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning in English. This is contributing to personalising the curriculum and maintaining continuity in pupils' learning experiences.
- APP is encouraging teachers and senior leaders to review assessment opportunities across the curriculum and share good practice. Good assessment practice in English, including clear target-setting and moderation procedures, has been adopted successfully in mathematics.
- The school is aware of the need to improve and consolidate pupils' writing skills. By successfully deploying assessment criteria and methodologies

from the 'Big Write', teachers and senior leaders are complementing APP criteria.

- Curriculum development meetings, focusing on individual staff strengths, APP, differentiation in teaching and cross-phase transition, are contributing to the rigour of school-improvement plans.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- consolidating strategies for assessing the writing skills, of bilingual pupils and those for whom English is as an additional language, to encourage more fluent, structured writing and accuracy in spelling
- developing timely electronic transfer of progression data across phases.

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

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector