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Mr G Seagrove
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Seagrove

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 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 outstanding.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- APP has made some contribution to improving the quality of the school's use of assessment to support learning and progress, principally by refining already effective practice. However, the upward trend in pupils' achievement is most significantly influenced by teachers' consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve; effective leadership and management of school improvement work; and regular collaboration between same-year-group teachers to develop individuals' practice.
- The accuracy of teachers' assessment enables them and school leaders to highlight gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding leading to timely intervention at individual pupil and group level. The impact of this is reflected in outcomes for pupils at both key stages. The proportion of 11-year-olds attaining both the expected and higher levels in English, mathematics and science is well above average. Unvalidated test results for 2010 continue the trend of improvement seen in previous years.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- APP support materials have been used to refine already effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress. Senior and middle leaders have carefully selected and adapted the APP support materials to meet the particular needs of the school and its pupils. This approach has been endorsed by the local authority.
- The school's approach to providing guidance to pupils to improve their work mirrors the key messages in APP, rather than being influenced by them. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked to improve the quality of feedback to pupils to better support their next steps in learning. Pupils are very clear on what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils from different year groups were able to explain confidently what they needed to do to improve their writing, for example, or their work in mathematics.

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

- APP has influenced the standardisation of formal assessments across different classes within the same year group. Working collaboratively, year group teams have devised a common set of assessment opportunities. This has helped teachers to achieve consistency when judging pupils' progress, supported by regular peer-moderation of their assessments.
- Senior and middle leaders have been confident in taking elements of APP and using these to strengthen already effective practice. For example, curriculum managers have used APP materials to refine teachers' use of guided reading as an assessment tool to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- School leaders and teachers consider that involvement with the APP initiative has made a valuable contribution to their professional dialogue about the use of assessment and other strategies to support learning. They report that training initiated by the local authority has helped the school get the most from APP materials.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP has assisted teachers in creating a good range of assessment opportunities common to all classes within the same year group.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- incorporating within the school's development plan, milestone points for evaluating the progress of actions for improvement, including those relating to APP.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop assessment practice in support of school improvement.

As I 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

Cathryn Kirby
Her Majesty's Inspector