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Mr G Sacks
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sacks

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 15 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; scrutiny of pupils' work; discussions with senior leaders other staff and pupils; and a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is good.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- Teachers' improved ability to identify individual needs and a growing understanding of progression in their subjects are contributing to raising pupils' attainment.
- Targets, based on APP level descriptors, where appropriate, are negotiated with pupils and this is engaging them more closely with their learning and contributing to improved achievement.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- Pupils are provided with appropriate success criteria and are encouraged and enabled to evaluate their own and other pupils' work. This is helping

them to evaluate their progress towards their targets and understand what they need to do to improve and develop their work.

- Regular reviews and progress reports keep parents and carers well informed about pupils' progress and their targets. This partnership between home and school promotes learning well.
- Targeted interventions, including individual tuition, have had a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress, particularly in English.

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

- Clear assessment procedures and a sharp focus on pupils' progress ensure that assessment is consistent across different subjects.
- The use of prior attainment data from mainstream schools combined with baseline testing ensures that teachers are aware of pupils' capabilities and needs. This information is used well to inform planning so that challenging tasks and activities are focused on the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Teachers and other adults in the classroom work well together and use skilful questioning to gauge what pupils have understood. Subsequent good oral feedback supports learning effectively. Consequently, pupils know what level they are working at and are becoming more independent and confident.

Impact on the curriculum

- Assessment opportunities are signposted in schemes of work and the curriculum is highly personalised. Teachers ensure that programmes of study are tailored to pupils' particular needs and interests. This improves attitudes to learning.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- building on improvements to moderating assessments and continuing to form productive partnerships with mainstream schools to develop this aspect of the school's work.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop the use of assessment 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

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector