

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



4 October 2010

Mr C Steer
Headteacher
Thomas Keble School
Eastcombe
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL6 7DY

Dear Mr Steer

Ofsted 2010–2011 survey inspection programme: assessing pupils' progress (APP)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 22 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 visit focused primarily on English and mathematics. The evidence used to inform the judgements included: scrutiny of documentation; observations of teaching and learning; and discussions with senior leaders, other staff, the local authority adviser for mathematics and students.

The overall use of assessment to support learning in the school is outstanding.

The APP initiative

Senior leaders in the school have a clear vision for assessment practice and APP; this is fully understood across the school, with very high levels of commitment.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- APP is making a contribution to improved attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. In addition, there have been significant improvements in attainment in Key Stage 3 in English. Attainment in mathematics has been sustained at a high level, with evidence of further improvement.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- Students made outstanding progress in the lessons observed. This is a direct result of:
 - the constant monitoring of students' progress against clear expectations and the way this leads to high quality dialogue about learning between teachers and students, and among students
 - the depth of most students' understanding of their current achievement, where they need to be – their short and longer-term targets, and of what they need to do to get there (a few students are unclear about how detailed, continuous feedback from teachers relates to these targets)
 - the extensive and highly effective use of self- and peer-assessment, helped by the use of a common language of assessment, that is fully understood and used by teachers and students
 - building students' confidence through a focus on their achievements.

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

- The extremely positive impact of APP and other aspects of assessment, on the quality of teaching in the school, is evidently clear. In particular:
 - the manner in which assessment, including the use of precise assessment information, is an integral part of all teaching and learning; as a result teaching is being matched extremely well to the class and to individual students
 - the high quality and deeply embedded system of feedback to students on 'what went well' and 'even better if ...' in lessons and in the marking of students' work
 - the sharpness of short-term target-setting for students that directly contributes to the progress they make
 - the quality of the relationship between assessment and carefully targeted interventions to support students' learning and progress
 - the quality of reports to parents about students' progress and targets
 - the close monitoring of the quality of teaching based on the analysis of extensive and precise information about students' achievement.

Impact on the curriculum

- The development of APP has had an extremely positive impact on the schemes of work used in English and mathematics. These schemes:
 - are securely based on strands of progression and steps in learning, informed well by APP level ladders and a deep understanding of progression in the subjects

- incorporate a wide repertoire of well-considered assessment strategies, including formal assessment tasks where appropriate
- provide teachers with the confidence to match what they teach, and the pace of progress through a topic, to pupils' needs.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- clarifying for some students the relationship between the detailed, continuous feedback they receive about their work and their short and longer-term targets.

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

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector