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Mr A Williams
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Williams

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 a representative from the local authority.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is good.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- The increased accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessment and their improved understanding of progression are contributing to raising pupils' achievement overall. Pupils' attainment has risen steadily over the last three years, and particularly in 2009. The school is rightly focusing on the progress of different groups of pupils including those who have been underachieving.
- APP has supported consistency in target setting, especially in Key Stage 2. In a few cases, targets could be reviewed earlier than they are to enable some pupils to do even better. The school is beginning to involve pupils successfully in setting their own targets.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- The gaps in pupils' learning are quickly identified by the school's effective use of APP criteria. Any pupil who is not performing well is given appropriate support through a range of intervention strategies. Consequently, most pupils make rapid progress.
- APP is helping to improve teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects where it is being implemented. Teachers are more able to clarify the component skills and understanding that help pupils to learn successfully. All pupils are benefiting from this, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils are beginning to be given opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work. The school recognises that this will help to clarify success criteria for pupils and develop their understanding of what they need to do to further improve their work.

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

- APP has fostered a collective responsibility and accountability for pupils' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to maximise the progress of all pupils, particularly the more vulnerable.
- APP has contributed significantly to the professional dialogue both within the school and with other schools. Teachers have developed a shared language for assessment which is helping cross-phase discussions of pupils' progress. This helps to ensure the continuity of pupils' learning and progress.
- APP has helped teachers to gain confidence and expertise in assessing pupils. External moderation confirms the accuracy of teachers' assessments.
- Teachers are more acutely aware of pupils' capabilities and prior learning. They are using this information to tailor learning activities to the needs of individuals and to move pupils on to the next step of learning at an appropriate time.
- The quality of teachers' marking is variable. However, the school recognises that APP is helping teachers to be more precise in their written comments. The best practice clarifies what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve further. Where marking is most effective, teachers monitor pupils' response to the guidance given.

Impact on the curriculum

- Teachers have become more confident in personalising the curriculum as they have gained greater understanding of pupils' individual needs through APP. Consequently, pupils enjoy their learning and are motivated to do well.
- APP has assisted teachers in creating a good range of assessment opportunities that is embedded in the curriculum.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- extending opportunities for pupils to be involved in setting their own targets, and assessing their own and each other's work
- sharing the effective assessment practice evident in Key Stage 2 more widely in Key Stage 1.

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

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector