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Mr Barker  
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Dear Mr Barker

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Evaluation of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 May 2007 to look at work in the Secondary National Strategy.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the national strategies, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of Assessment for Learning (AfL).

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of provision in mathematics was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in mathematics is outstanding. The impact of assessment for learning AfL on achievement is good.

- Standards are exceptionally high in Key Stage 4 and they are good in Key Stage 3.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. Progress is outstanding by the end of Key Stage 4.

- Pupils' progress in the lessons observed was outstanding.
- Key aspects of the national strategies are in place to aid lesson planning and the structuring of lessons. These have had a good impact on pupils' learning.
- All teachers use AfL activities effectively to help pupils learn. Teachers are very skilful at adjusting lessons to take account of pupil's learning. Planned activities were dropped when it was clear that further consolidation was not needed.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The impact of AfL on teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge that extends to include an exceptional awareness of how mathematics can be applied. Work is consistently well matched to the needs of learners.
- There are frequent opportunities for pupils to explore mathematical concepts in Key Stage 3. Pupils were very positive about teaching that required them to show persistence in providing their own mathematical explanations. This deeper grasp of mathematics means pupils are very well prepared for Key Stage 4. The need to cover an extensive syllabus reduces these opportunities at Key Stage 4.
- Starter activities are used extremely well to focus pupils' attention at the beginning of lessons. Outcomes of lessons are made highly relevant by frequent references to how the skills can be applied elsewhere. In the main part of lessons exercises are used flexibly to maximise progress. During plenary sessions pupils are clear about what they have learnt.
- Marking provides feedback on effort and positively recognises achievement. Pupils appreciate how common problems identified in homework are considered in lessons. There is scope for more marking which identifies areas for individuals to improve.
- Although AfL is used very effectively by teachers there is scope for greater involvement of pupils in evaluating their own progress using known criteria.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. AfL has resulted in a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils therefore the impact is outstanding.

- Numeracy across the curriculum is very well developed. It has been carefully co-ordinated so that mathematical skills and understanding are reinforced throughout the curriculum.
- The curriculum is exceptional in the extent to which it demonstrates the application of mathematics. Many pupils have the opportunity to

undertake mathematical problem-solving activity through vocational courses, and in science and geography.

- Very good team work by teachers ensures that schemes of work are implemented consistently.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The headteacher has created an impressive ethos in which the needs and interests of pupils are considered above all else. The school is creative in working with a wide range of partners to meet these needs.
- The head of mathematics leads by example and has created a highly effective team that consistently uses AfL approaches to ensure outstanding outcomes.

## Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is good.

- Effective communication and a strong school ethos have resulted in consistent approaches to AfL.
- A very strong feature is the links made to other subjects that reinforce learning and ensure pupils recognise mathematical applications.
- End of unit tests are analysed to derive targets for pupils and feedback is generally encouraging. However, written feedback is inconsistent in providing guidance on how pupils can improve.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is outstanding. The impact of AfL on inclusion is outstanding.

- All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Class sizes are reduced and teaching assistants are deployed well ensuring that pupils with specific needs make good progress.
- The curriculum is adapted effectively to ensure pupils follow appropriate courses.
- Time for revision is managed well to ensure that it is effective for more vulnerable pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for evaluating their progress and what they can do to improve further
- providing further opportunities for pupils to explore their own mathematical thinking.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics and assessment for learning in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick  
Her Majesty's Inspector