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Mrs Crowcroft
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Crowcroft

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 12 June 2007 to look at work in the Primary National Strategy (PNS).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the PNS, 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 six parts of lessons. There was a particular focus on teaching and learning in English.

The overall effectiveness of the PNS was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement and personal development are outstanding. Teachers' use of assessment is outstanding because it helps pupils to make exceptionally good progress.

- Pupils start school with skills well below those typical for their age. They make outstanding progress and, by the time they leave at the

age of seven, standards in English and mathematics are above the national average.

- Pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD) and those with English as an additional language (EAL) make excellent progress. Teachers quickly identify the needs of pupils and together with the teaching assistants' strong contribution, provide very good support.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. AfL is central to this success because pupils develop exceptional skills in assessing their own achievements and talking about what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils work very well independently and learn much through discussion with partners.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are consistently outstanding. An important part of this is teachers' excellent use of assessment to make clear to pupils what their next steps of learning are.

- Lessons contain many interesting activities that help pupils to make very good progress through discussion, problem-solving and independent research.
- Outstanding teaching includes periodic pauses during which pupils assess their own, or their partner's progress towards the lesson objective. Pupils provide very honest evaluations of any difficulties they experience. Teachers give them clear guidance on what to do next and this helps them to make very good progress.
- Lessons end productively with pupils assessing their progress and giving detailed reasons and examples to support their judgement. Teachers use this information to explain what the pupils need to concentrate on next.
- Marking is good. It evaluates how well pupils met their learning objective. A school priority is to provide time for pupils' responses to marking.
- In the Foundation Stage, every activity has a poster setting out what pupils are expected to learn. This helps staff to observe and record children's progress on a continuous basis.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding. Teachers make outstanding use of assessment to inform target setting and planning.

- Pupils enjoy a rich curriculum that relates closely to their interests, makes useful connections between different subjects and provides many opportunities for improving literacy skills.
- The school uses detailed analysis of pupils' performance to set targets for improvement. Teachers accurately plan lessons so that pupils achieve their targets.

- Teachers keep very good records showing which pupils are above or below national expectations for their age. They use these very effectively for planning work that helps all groups of pupils to make above average progress.

Leadership and management

Leadership at all levels is outstanding, both in relation to AfL and to pupils' achievement in English.

- Your clear vision and good teamwork between the deputy headteacher and co-ordinators ensures consistent and outstanding approaches to AfL throughout the school.
- The school has made excellent use of the PNS and a local authority school improvement programme to improve AfL. Other schools are now learning from Herringthorpe.
- The leadership team has effectively managed a range of different programmes so that they combine to form a coherent strategy for developing AfL in line with the school's priorities.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL is outstanding.

- Pupils accurately assess and discuss their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Teachers' precise guidance helps pupils to make very good progress because they understand how to improve.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is outstanding.

- Provision is outstanding for pupils with LDD, those with EAL and those identified as gifted and talented. The "Every Child Matters" co-ordinator maintains very useful records of the needs of these groups of pupils, the provision made for them and their progress. The records enable precision in planning additional support and this helps each group to make outstanding progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the consistency of feedback to pupils on their writing, and providing time for pupils to respond to marking.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English 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

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector