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Miss G Arnold
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Arnold

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 National Strategy (NS).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the strategy, 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the national strategy was judged satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory. The impact of AfL on pupils' achievement and personal development is also broadly satisfactory.

- Standards are broadly average in English and pupils' progress is satisfactory. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is low because there are few pupils who enter the school with the higher levels at Key Stage 1.
- In the lessons observed, pupils make at least satisfactory progress because they understand what is expected of them and how well they are doing.

- Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve satisfactorily.
- Boys make less progress than girls in relation to national comparisons.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. They work well in lessons but many are not aware how their targets relate to their progress.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory. The impact of AfL on teaching and learning is also satisfactory.

- In the better lessons, insights from assessments inform planning. Teachers make clear links to both previous and future learning.
- Detailed feedback provides clear evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. However, many pupils give insufficient attention to feedback and this means that it fails to help them improve their work.
- In too many lessons, progress is slow because teachers fail to ask questions that encourage pupils to think and explain their reasoning.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is satisfactory as is the impact of AfL on the curriculum.

- Pupils enjoy English, particularly when teaching and resources promote their active involvement and collaborative work.
- English skills and pupils' understanding are satisfactorily integrated into other subjects across the curriculum. There are appropriate opportunities for written and oral activities across the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of AfL is also satisfactory.

- The senior leadership team have promoted AfL as central to their plans for raising achievement. However, its implementation is not yet consistently good.
- The leadership of English is satisfactory. AfL is highly valued and has helped raise standards to broadly average. An audit of the subject has enabled staff to accurately identify areas for development.
- Assessment data is analysed effectively to monitor trends in performance. The school has made satisfactory use of end of term assessments to help identify strengths and areas for development in teaching across the curriculum.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is satisfactory.

- AfL has contributed positively to the satisfactory progress made by the pupils over the last three years. The good AfL practice seen in some classes is not yet applied consistently by all teachers.
- Pupils are familiar with some aspects of AfL, but the strategy is only satisfactorily helping them understand how they can improve their literacy skills.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is satisfactory.

- All groups, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve satisfactorily.
- The school provides satisfactory support for pupils at risk of underachievement for emotional or behavioural reasons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that in English lessons pupils have a greater awareness of their individual targets and how they can improve their work
- improve teachers' use of questioning strategies so that they encourage pupils to think and enable more accurate assessment of learning.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector