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Dear Mrs Kondal

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 13 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 is good.

Achievement and standards

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

- Standards are average in English but pupils' progress is good. Achievement has improved significantly each year since 2004. However, in a minority of lessons pupils make only satisfactory progress.

- Pupils who enter the school with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English receive effective support and make good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are committed to reaching challenging targets. They accurately assess their own work and that of others.

Quality of teaching and learning of English

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

- The good use of assessment ensures that, in most lessons, teachers accurately target questions and activities to meet the needs of all pupils.
- There is a strong culture of collaborative learning. Good opportunities for paired talk allow pupils to develop ideas and understanding. These occasions are highly valued by the pupils.
- In the minority of satisfactory lessons, progress slows because pupils sit passively for too long or because there is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils.

Quality of curriculum

The English curriculum is good as is the impact of AfL on the curriculum.

- The carefully planned English curriculum meets the needs of individuals and builds upon prior attainment.
- Intervention programmes, promoted through the national strategies, accelerate the learning of underachieving groups of pupils.
- Teachers' feedback helps pupils' progress and there are good examples of pupils assessing their own work and that of their peers.
- There are missed opportunities to promote English curricular targets in other subjects.

Leadership and management

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

- The senior leadership team have a clear understanding of AfL and how it contributes to the school's rapid improvement. Since the introduction of the national strategy, they have carefully selected aspects that support and develop their vision.
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensures that AfL policies are implemented consistently and that the school remains focused on improving achievement.

- There is a strong commitment to the professional development of staff. Most teachers now use AfL effectively and achieve good, and sometimes, outstanding outcomes as result of effective training.
- Parents and carers do not yet play a strong role as partners in their children's learning.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is good.

- AfL is a key feature of the school's successful drive to raise standards. It is integrated into teaching across the curriculum and there is clear evidence of its positive impact on teaching and learning.
- AfL has had an outstanding impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils are confident, enjoy working collaboratively and are exceptionally keen to take responsibility for their own learning.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is good.

- The impact of AfL is shown in that all groups are currently making good progress after many years of underachievement. Changes to teaching styles ensure that girls achieve as well as boys.
- Pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress. There is close monitoring of the impact of strategies to accelerate learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that in English lessons, the higher attaining pupils are regularly provided with activities that both challenge and inspire them, so that they make the best possible progress
- ensure that pupils do not sit passively for too long in lessons, listening to teachers explaining or introducing activities.

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