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Mr R Holmes
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Dear Mr Holmes

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 October 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 five lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is good as is the impact of AfL on pupils' achievement and personal development.

- Pupils start school with skills typical for their age. Provisional results in the 2007 national tests show that standards are above average by the time they leave in Year 6.

- Pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD), make good progress. Teachers' good use of assessment contributes to this.
- Pupils work very well independently because the tasks planned for them provide good challenges.
- Pupils improve their progress by skilfully assessing their own learning and by marking the work of others.
- In a minority of lessons, too many pupils avoid giving an answer when the teacher asks questions. There is insufficient variation in the questions to match the range of attainment in the class.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is good, as is the impact of AfL.

- Lessons are well planned and provide good challenge for pupils working at all levels of attainment. Teachers continuously assess pupils' progress and modify their planning accordingly.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the objective of the lesson and frequently update them on what they need to do to achieve it. However, there are variations in how well this is done as pupils move from one class to another.
- Teachers' good marking helps pupils to understand how well they have met their learning objective and what they need to do to improve further.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. The impact of AfL on the curriculum is also good.

- The curriculum enables pupils at all levels of attainment to make good progress. This is because planning is focused on meeting challenging end-of-year targets for each pupil.
- Pupils' progress towards these targets is monitored well and planning is adapted for any who are underachieving. Modifications to the curriculum for higher attaining pupils have resulted in a considerable improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the highest level in the national Key Stage 2 tests.
- The school has started to give pupils personal targets as milestones towards their end-of-year targets. This approach is helping the pupils to concentrate on their day-to-day work, but it is not yet applied consistently across all classes.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in English are good.

- Senior leaders make good use of results from tests and assessments to identify which areas of the curriculum need greater attention.
- They support the introduction of new AfL approaches by monitoring their implementation in every class and providing additional support where required.
- They systematically evaluate the impact of strategies used with underachieving pupils and modify them where necessary.
- The English co-ordinator has a positive influence by evaluating teaching and learning in all classes and providing constructive feedback.
- The effectiveness of the leadership and management of AfL is good.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is good.

- The use of assessment in planning is good because it enables pupils at all levels of attainment to make good progress towards challenging targets.
- AfL makes a good contribution to pupils' progress in lessons because pupils clearly understand their objectives and are involved in assessing their own progress.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is good.

- Provision for underachieving groups and those with LDD is very well planned to meet their individual needs. The impact of intervention is carefully monitored and records demonstrate that these pupils make good progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that pupils in all classes are provided with personal targets which make clear the steps of learning necessary to help them achieve their end-of-year targets.

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