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Mr S Iredale
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Dear Mr Iredale

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 17 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 four 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 well below those typical for their age. They make good progress and reach standards which are just below average by the time they leave in Year 6.

- Results from the 2006 national tests show that higher attaining pupils achieve well.
- Weaknesses in identifying and supporting underachieving pupils have been addressed. These pupils are now making better than expected progress.
- Pupils' achievement in speaking and their ability to work independently are exceptional. This contributes to their good progress in English.
- Pupils consolidate their learning by assessing their partners' work. However, their skills in self-assessment are at an early stage of development.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

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

- Some aspects of teaching are outstanding, particularly when it is stimulating and inspires a very enthusiastic response from the pupils.
- Lesson planning is good and ensures that the needs of all pupils are met.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons because they are aware of the learning objectives and how well they are working towards it.
- Marking provides pupils with good information on how well they have completed their work but rarely tells them what they still need to do to improve.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for their groups. They also provide the teachers with useful assessments of pupils' progress.
- Daily planning and assessment in the Foundation Stage are good and help the children to achieve well. Plans for each member of staff provide effective guidance on how to adapt their assessment according to the children's skills and experience.

Quality of curriculum

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

- Planning is effectively based on comprehensive records of pupils' progress through national curriculum levels. These records are used consistently by all teachers. However, they do not all collect accurate information and use it for setting challenging end-of-year targets for each pupil.
- Teachers use termly assessments of writing very effectively to guide pupils on what they need to learn to progress towards a higher national curriculum level.
- Teachers provide each pupil with personal targets for writing, which are regularly reviewed and updated. Pupils use these effectively to help them improve their day to day work.

- Teachers effectively use their records to identify underachieving pupils and the reasons for their slow progress. This information is also used well to plan programmes of work that help these pupils to improve their progress rapidly.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in English are good as is the leadership and management of AfL.

- Senior leaders introduce improvements to the use of assessment for raising standards with good pace. They have a clear understanding of aspects that still need to be refined.
- They make good use of results from tests and assessments to identify which areas of the curriculum need greater attention.
- The English co-ordinators provide good leadership by identifying key priorities for improvement and focusing colleagues' work on them.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is good.

- Since the previous inspection, teachers have made good progress in using assessment to plan work that helps all pupils to improve their 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 the provision is monitored regularly and this shows that the pupils are making good progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that teachers' marking guides pupils on how to improve their work
- further improving teachers' skills in using records of pupils' progress to set challenging 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