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Mrs V Cameron
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cameron

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 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 part lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory. The impact of AfL on achievement is also satisfactory.

- Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills which are broadly in line with national expectations.
- Standards in English by the end of Years 2 and 6 were broadly average although results in writing fell slightly.

- In the lessons observed, pupils made at least satisfactory progress. When given the opportunity to take initiative in their learning, they responded enthusiastically and worked very well in pairs and groups.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. The impact of AfL on teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly.
- Lessons usually contain a good variety of activities and relationships are very good.
- Teachers generally match work to pupils' needs effectively, although in two lessons higher attaining pupils were not fully stretched.
- In the better lessons, teachers structured pupils' learning very well and modelled how to improve their writing. However, in other lessons, teachers over directed learning and the pace was too slow.
- Recent systems for tracking pupils' progress, setting pupil targets and commenting on work are used by all teachers but, as yet, with varying effectiveness in improving pupils' progress.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. AfL is having an increasing impact on the curriculum.

- The curriculum is under review to build in longer units of work with more opportunities for extended writing.
- Teachers' planning increasingly reflects the consolidation and use of literacy skills across subjects.
- New topics of work, such as those based around the themed 'Roman' day, present good opportunities for structured speaking, listening and writing.
- The use of pupil tracking information and layered targets is effective in matching the curriculum to pupils' identified weaknesses.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in English and of AfL are good.

- The new headteacher and senior leaders have rapidly and accurately identified priorities and key areas for improvement.
- Appropriate training and support are provided to ensure that teachers understand and adopt agreed approaches to assessment and teaching.
- Recent initiatives are used consistently across classes but, as yet, their effectiveness varies.
- The subject leader and lead literacy teacher work well together to provide guidance and promote best practice.

- Senior leaders have a realistic understanding of how much progress has been achieved and a firm commitment to judging performance through pupils' achievement.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is satisfactory and improving.

- Teachers use clear learning objectives in lessons and, in the best practice, make clear the steps that pupils need to make to achieve the objective.
- Teachers' use of questioning varies in quality, with too many relying on mainly closed questions. In the best lessons, pupils were challenged to explain and justify their views.
- Although teachers give pupils opportunities to talk to partners, these occasions are not always linked to the most appropriate questions nor provide sufficient time for pupils to feed back to others.
- Teachers' marking is consistent with school policy, relates to learning objectives and provides helpful comment. The best builds on pupil self assessment and is very precise in directing pupils to specific sentences for improvement. The teacher then subsequently comments on the pupil's changes and assesses these against their target.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is satisfactory.

- Data on pupils' progress are used effectively to identify particular needs for support and curriculum planning.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to individual pupils and lead small groups with initiative.
- In some classes, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged, especially in writing.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the school focus on writing is planned effectively across the curriculum
- sharing the school's best practice in teaching and assessment so that all teachers improve further
- investigating ways to use pupils' strong oral skills to improve the quality of their writing.

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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector