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Mr Latham
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Latham

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 04 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 seven parts of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their personal development is good. The impact of AfL on pupils' achievement and personal development is satisfactory.

- Pupils start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age.

- Standards in mathematics improved in the national assessments in 2007. However, they are still well below the national average when pupils leave the school.
- Pupils, including those with a learning difficulty or disability (LDD), make satisfactory progress.
- The school's recent use of AfL, such as the guidance provided in teachers' marking, is gradually increasing the rate of pupils' progress.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They are keen and confident learners. They enjoy group work and from the Foundation Stage are developing the skills of assessing their own and others' work.
- AfL is promoting the pupils' ability to work as independent learners. Most pupils know their targets and are motivated to achieve them.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

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

- Teachers consistently use the AfL methods in mathematics but with differing levels of effectiveness.
- Most teachers use their knowledge of pupils' weaknesses to plan lessons that successfully match the gaps in their learning. However, in a minority of lessons, activities do not meet the needs of all pupils.
- Teachers' oral and written comments on pupils' work relate clearly to learning objectives and provide good guidance on how pupils can improve.
- Too often, teachers' questioning focuses on obtaining correct answers and too few opportunities are given for explanations or reasoning.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory, as is the impact of AfL on the curriculum.

- Following PNS guidance, the school has made a good start in using tracking information to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to identify groups of pupils that need additional support and to plan work matched to their needs. PNS intervention programmes such as springboard have helped accelerate progress in some year groups.
- The development of numeracy skills through subjects other than mathematics is at a very early stage.
- There is insufficient guidance to support the teaching of mathematics to pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Leadership and management

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

- The headteacher provides very good leadership in the implementation of the PNS, including AfL. His work is driving improvements in pupils' achievement. He is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning across the school.
- The extended leadership team share responsibility for mathematics and, through support from the headteacher and local authority, have a positive influence on the quality of teaching and assessment in the subject.
- The leadership of mathematics has not yet ensured that the use of AfL secures good quality learning.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is satisfactory.

- The school has made a good start in establishing AfL as an effective strand of teaching and learning in most classes.
- The headteacher has laid good foundations for future development. Other leaders, including those in mathematics, are less secure in building on this initial work.
- All staff have started to implement the principles of AfL in their daily practice. In most classes pupils' progress and personal development is improving.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is satisfactory.

- Effective use is made of assessment information to plan additional support for lower attaining pupils. There is much good progress because of these interventions, but it is not yet consistent throughout the school.
- In a minority of classes teaching does not consistently meet the needs of the highest and lowest attainers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the role of the extended leadership team in mathematics
- improving the quality of teachers' questioning to promote understanding
- ensuring that the teaching of mathematics meets the needs of pupils across the range of ability.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics 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,

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector