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Mrs J Garner
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Garner

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 16 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 parts of six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

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

- Standards in English are good. There has been very good improvement in recent years and pupils' attainment in writing is outstanding.

- Pupils' progress in lessons was generally good although in a third of the lessons observed, where AfL strategies were not evident, there was insufficient challenge.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. In most lessons they use teachers' feedback and targets set for them to achieve good progress. However, their involvement in peer and self-assessment is limited.

Quality of teaching and learning in English

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

- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and their lesson plans contain appropriate learning objectives. However, in a third of lessons objectives are expressed as tasks rather than as precise intentions for learning.
- The majority of lessons observed had interesting activities that motivated the pupils. Good questioning encouraged the pupils to explain their reasoning. However, this high quality practice is not yet consistent throughout the school.
- Teachers' marking in English is generally good. The comments are constructive and reflect a good understanding of the pupils' progress.
- Pupils particularly value the regular writing assessments because they enjoy the challenge of trying to meet their targets.
- The sharing of ideas and views with partners was an effective feature of most lessons.
- In the less effective lessons, the activities set did not match the pupils' needs. This resulted in a lack of challenge for higher and lower attainers.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the English curriculum is good. The impact of AfL on the curriculum is satisfactory.

- In English there are clear assessment points and most teachers make satisfactory use of the information gained to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils.
- PNS intervention programmes contribute to the good progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes.
- The development of speaking and listening is an integral feature of the English curriculum and contributes well to the very high standards in writing.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in English are satisfactory. Leadership and management of AfL across the school are also satisfactory.

- The leadership team for English have limited opportunities to monitor or evaluate the impact of AfL in the subject. A consequence is that, although AfL is central to plans for raising achievement, its implementation is not yet consistently good.
- The systems in place to track the progress pupils make during the school year are sound.
- The leadership team analyses assessment data satisfactorily. They are aware of trends, strengths and weaknesses but monitoring of the performance of groups lacks sufficient rigour.
- When lesson observations and work scrutinies take place there is no agreed policy for recording or reporting on findings.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL is satisfactory in English.

- There is a comprehensive planning, assessment and recording policy which promotes key aspects of AfL but its implementation is inconsistent.
- Most staff plan appropriate learning activities, share learning objectives, differentiate work and provide effective feedback. However, this practice is not embedded throughout the school.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is satisfactory.

- All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve well.
- Support from teaching assistants in classrooms is sound. It is effective when the planned activities meet the range of needs in the class.
- Grouping arrangements take satisfactory account of the needs of pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring information on pupils' progress consistently informs lesson planning to meet the needs of higher and lower attainers
- implementing the school's planning, assessment and recording policy by sharing existing good practice and providing targeted training
- improving the monitoring and evaluation of teaching in English.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector