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Mrs L Appleby
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Appleby

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: assessing pupils' progress (APP)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 15 June 2010 to evaluate the impact of the APP initiative.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: scrutiny of documentation; observations of teaching and learning; and discussions with senior leaders, other staff and pupils, and a representative from the local authority.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is good.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- The increased accuracy of teachers' assessment and their deeper understanding of progression are contributing to raising pupils' attainment and achievement.
- APP has supported the development of short-term targets that keep pupils focused on their next learning steps, thereby maintaining their good rate of progress. The school is rightly considering how to involve pupils more in setting their own targets.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- The school's effective use of APP criteria clearly indicates gaps in pupils' learning that are tackled by appropriately tailored interventions.

- Pupils have good opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work. In this context, APP is helping to clarify success criteria for pupils and develop their understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- APP is advancing pupils' acquisition of knowledge and understanding through ensuring that learning is sequenced appropriately and improving teachers' subject knowledge.
- APP is helping to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and promoting their inclusion in lesson activities.

Impact on the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to support learning

- Teachers are sharply focused on pupils' progress, and assessment practice is more consistent.
- The link between assessment and planning has been strengthened by APP. This is evident in a closer match between learning objectives and pupils' needs.
- Teachers' awareness of pupils' capabilities and prior learning has been heightened by APP. Consequently, they are clearer about when to move pupils to the next step in learning.
- The quality of teachers' marking varies. However, APP is increasing the precision of teachers' written comments, and, where marking is most effective, there is evidence that pupils are responding to this clearer guidance.
- The dialogue between teachers, engendered by APP, has been highly beneficial. Both a shared understanding of National Curriculum levels and a shared language for assessment are now well developed and enabling teachers to discuss pupils' learning across the phases.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP has promoted a curriculum that is personalised and flexible. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and are motivated to do well.
- APP has assisted teachers in creating a good range of assessment opportunities that is integral to the curriculum.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- sharing good practice in marking to reduce the variation in the quality of teachers' written feedback to pupils
- extending opportunities for pupils to be involved in setting their own targets.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop APP in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector