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Mrs C Harvey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harvey

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 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, staff, 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' achievement. Standards have risen considerably since the school's institutional inspection in 2008. Pupils, including those groups who were underachieving, are now making better progress.
- APP has improved the rigour of target-setting at a whole-school level. In addition, targets for individual pupils are more subject-specific. However, in some cases, when they are achieved, they are not revised quickly enough.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- The school is using APP criteria well to identify gaps in pupils' learning and tailor interventions that will tackle them.

- APP is helping to improve teachers' subject knowledge. Consequently, teachers are more able to clarify the component skills and understanding that add up to successful learning. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are benefiting from this precision.
- APP has increased the consistency of the school's assessment practice. It has encouraged the school to share pupils' learning targets with parents to help them support their children's learning more effectively.
- As a result of using APP, teachers are more focused on pupils' ability to evaluate their own and each other's work. Pupils have good access to clear success criteria in lessons to help them assess the quality of their work.

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

- APP has reinforced a collective accountability for pupils' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants are more systematic in maximising the progress of all pupils.
- The professional dialogue instigated by APP has been highly beneficial. A shared language for assessment is enabling teachers to discuss pupils' learning across the phases which sustains their progress through points of transition.
- Moderation is a well-established practice in the school. However, formal opportunities for teachers to arrive at judgements about the quality of pupils' work through collaboration are limited.
- Teachers have gained confidence and expertise in using assessment information to plan learning that builds on pupils' capabilities and understanding.

Impact on the curriculum

- A better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning is assisting teachers in personalising the curriculum and developing pupils' engagement with learning.
- APP is helping teachers to map assessment opportunities across the curriculum.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring the timely revision of pupils' targets
- creating regular opportunities for teachers to jointly evaluate pupils' work.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop assessment in your 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