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Mr Fairclough
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fairclough

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 22 September 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; discussions with senior leaders, other staff and pupils; and a telephone conversation with a local authority officer.

The overall use of assessment to support learning is good.

Impact on pupils' achievement and attainment

- As a result of their engagement with APP, teachers' deepening understanding of progression in subjects is contributing to pupils' improving achievement. Attainment has risen considerably over the last three years with most pupils making good progress consistently.
- APP has helped teachers and senior leaders clarify strengths and weaknesses in learning in relation to cohorts, classes, particular groups and individual pupils. This has improved the rigour of target-setting at all levels and strengthened systems for monitoring pupils' progress.

Impact on the quality of pupils' learning and progress

- APP contributes to providing pupils with appropriate success criteria that enable them to evaluate their own and other pupils' work. As well as motivating them to succeed, regular opportunities for peer- and self-

assessment are giving pupils a deeper understanding of the purpose of their learning.

- APP criteria inform teachers' individual discussions with pupils about their learning. These conversations are beginning to support pupils' involvement in setting and reviewing their own targets. The school rightly wants to develop this approach further.
- The school is using APP well to identify gaps in pupils' learning and tailor interventions that will tackle them.

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

- APP has triggered the growth of a culture of continuous learning within the school. This is demonstrated in the high-quality professional dialogue between staff about what best promotes and supports effective learning. In addition, there is a collective accountability for pupils' progress with all teachers focused strongly on meeting the needs of individual pupils. Teaching assistants are enthusiastic about working alongside teachers in this endeavour but would benefit from further training in the use of APP.
- Teachers are fluent in the common assessment language provided by APP. This is enabling collaborative approaches to planning learning that build on pupils' capabilities and understanding systematically.
- APP has helped teachers to develop the skill of probing pupils' understanding in lessons. In this context, questioning and 'talk partners' are used well.
- APP has facilitated thorough moderation of pupils' attainment that has consolidated teachers' knowledge of National Curriculum levels and raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Impact on the curriculum

- APP is promoting the development of cross-curricular links that help pupils to understand how subjects are interconnected.
- APP is enabling teachers to map assessment opportunities across the curriculum in a coherent and systematic way. This has enhanced creativity because teachers are confident that pupils' learning experiences are anchored to a rigorous framework for assessment.

Areas for development, which we discussed, include:

- establishing regular individual discussions with pupils to involve them in reviewing their learning and setting targets
- increasing opportunities for teaching assistants to undertake training in the use of APP to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop assessment practice in support of school improvement.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector