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Dear Mrs Harris

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 with Anthony O'Malley on 03 May 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 Strategy, 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the NS was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in mathematics is outstanding. The impact of assessment for learning on pupils' achievement and personal development is also outstanding.

- Standards are significantly above average and pupils' progress is outstanding. In each of the previous three years, their progress has been in the top ten percent nationally.

- This outstanding achievement is founded upon excellent use of assessment and, in particular, assessment for learning.
- In the lessons observed, pupils' progress was good overall. Pupils were clear about what they were expected to learn and how the work helped them improve.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and their accurate self evaluations are impressive. They respond well to working collaboratively.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good. The impact of assessment for learning on teaching and learning is also good.

- The very good use of assessment ensures that teachers accurately target questions and activities to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils made best progress when they were encouraged to give explanations for their reasoning as well as their answers.
- In all lessons, pupils effectively evaluated the progress they had made. The pupils were confident, noting both achievements and misunderstandings.
- In the satisfactory lessons pupils were less clear about the purpose of their tasks and were insufficiently challenged to explain their answers.

Quality of curriculum

The mathematics curriculum is outstanding as is the impact of assessment for learning on the curriculum.

- Pupils enjoy mathematics. The curriculum ensures that learning is deepened through challenging investigations and practical activities.
- Interactive whiteboards are used well to demonstrate ideas and actively involve the pupils.
- The progress of all groups is carefully monitored. Additional support and intervention programmes are used effectively to overcome any barriers to learning.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in mathematics are outstanding. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of assessment for learning is also outstanding.

- The senior leadership team have placed assessment for learning at the heart of their plans for raising achievement. Since the introduction of the strategy, they have carefully selected aspects that support and develop their vision.

- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensures that assessment for learning policies are implemented consistently and that the school remains committed to improvement.
- The school gathers comprehensive data on pupils' academic progress as well as assessments of their attitudes and confidence. This information is analysed carefully to target additional support. The impact of any intervention work is thoroughly evaluated.
- There is a strong commitment to the professional development of staff, enabling them to become successful members of a highly skilled team.

Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is outstanding.

- Rigorous assessment procedures ensure that assessment informs planning and teaching.
- Assessment for learning has been crucial in raising achievement. It ensures that teachers and pupils focus on understanding mathematics, as opposed to finding answers. The pupils value the time given in class for reflection, discussion and self evaluation.
- The commitment to assessment for learning has had a very positive impact on the pupils' personal development. The pupils are confident, enjoy working collaboratively and are ready to take responsibility for their learning.

Inclusion

The impact of AfL on inclusion is outstanding.

- All groups in this diverse community achieve well. The needs of pupils learning English as an additional language and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are accurately identified and barriers to progress removed.
- The school monitors data closely for evidence of variations in progress between groups of learners by gender, ethnicity, deprivation or 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

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector