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Mrs S Barber
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Barber

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 26 January 2011 to look at work in mathematics.

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: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average levels of attainment by the end of Year 6. There was a strong trend of improvement in attainment between 2005 and 2009, from well below to above average. It dipped to below average in 2010 when there were very high numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The current Year 6 pupils are on course for average attainment.
- Most pupils enjoy mathematics lessons, take part with enthusiasm and work well, both independently and with a partner. For example, Year 6 pupils discussed animatedly whether different nets could be made into three-dimensional shapes.
- Pupils are reasonably accurate when performing calculations and have sound reasoning skills, but some pupils have gaps in their understanding

of key concepts and mathematical language that hinder more rapid progress. This is often the case for the higher-than-average proportion of pupils who join the school part-way through a year or key stage.

- The higher-than-average proportion of pupils with additional learning needs, including those whose first language is not English, make satisfactory progress in lessons. Carefully designed, intensive intervention programmes, administered to individuals and small groups, often lead to good progress in overcoming specific difficulties and extending pupils' understanding of basic skills and concepts.
- Pupils make good progress in those lessons where teachers tailor mental mathematics activities and main tasks to the needs of different ability groups. In these lessons, all pupils make good progress in understanding new concepts and developing reasoning skills.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is satisfactory.

- The proportion of good teaching is steadily rising as a result of well-informed and rigorous leadership. This is leading to increasingly effective use of assessment to inform teachers' planning, greater emphasis on the use of mathematical vocabulary, and better integration of investigations and problem-solving activities into everyday work.
- The main reason that teaching is not yet consistently good is that match of work for the more able and less able pupils in lessons is not always sharp enough, in both the starter activities and the main part of the lesson. In addition, some lesson introductions are too long and pupils do not have enough time for active, independent learning.
- The quality of marking and verbal feedback to pupils is improving, including the use of self- and peer-assessment. The best examples provide clear guidance for pupils on how to improve their work and opportunities to follow this up.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- Greater emphasis on developing conceptual understanding is helping to improve progression in learning. Leaders have increased the focus on incorporating open-ended investigative and problem-solving activities into regular daily work. Some good practice is emerging but this is not yet consistent enough across the school, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Links with other subjects are not well developed so pupils have too few opportunities to use and apply their skills across the curriculum.
- The school has devised effective intervention programmes to support pupils with particular special educational needs and/or disabilities. These are having a good impact on reducing gaps in pupils' skills and understanding and particularly in building their confidence. A good range of enrichment activities for the most able pupils is helping to extend their

learning beyond routine classroom work which does not always provide enough challenge.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of mathematics is good.

- You and the assistant headteacher have taken decisive action since assuming shared leadership for mathematics in September 2010 and have implemented a rigorous programme of monitoring, data analysis and support for all staff. As a result, teaching is improving and pupils' progress is accelerating, though not yet consistently, across the school.
- In addition to regular training sessions for the whole staff, senior leaders provide individual support for each teacher in turn over a period of weeks. This includes team-teaching, modelling lessons, supporting the planning process and strengthening assessment procedures. Teachers speak highly of this support; one was particularly appreciative of the support in identifying different objectives and activities for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and a mathematically gifted pupil.
- Leaders are successfully communicating high expectations to all staff, who are given responsibility for pupils' achievement through challenging performance targets. Senior leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and meet with each teacher regularly to discuss individual pupils, review targets and decide on interventions where underachievement is noted. Leaders also evaluate the impact of each intervention at regular intervals to ensure its effectiveness.
- Leaders make effective use of specialist mathematics resources to support teachers and extend their subject knowledge. They ensure that teaching assistants receive appropriate training for delivering intervention programmes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- accelerating pupils' progress by ensuring greater consistency in the way that teachers differentiate learning in lessons, so that activities are tailored more closely to the needs of the more-able and less-able pupils
- providing clear guidance for all staff on how to ensure progression in key concepts from year to year for pupils of all abilities
- fully embedding opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematical skills and knowledge, both in daily mathematics lessons and through the wider curriculum.

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

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector