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27 January 2011

Mrs S Blair
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Blair

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 17 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 one lesson, three part-lessons and four intervention groups.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- According to the school's records, children enter the school with mathematical knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age and make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although children's understanding of number and shape is broadly average by the end of Reception, their calculation skills are below average.
- Historically, pupils have made satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1. However, attainment is rising in response to increasing expectations and challenge. Year 2 pupils' current attainment is broadly average.
- The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 is exceptionally good. Pupils are currently entering Year 3 at higher levels than in the past. The attainment of Year 6 pupils is average and rising.

- Boys and girls make equally good progress. In the past, average and lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made good progress, whereas the progress made by more able pupils had been satisfactory. The school has implemented an action plan to increase the progress made by more able pupils, which is beginning to pay dividends.
- Pupils develop a secure understanding of number, shape and handling data but, in the past, they have struggled to solve mathematical problems. Significant improvements to the curriculum are helping to improve pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics, including investigations.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics, behave well in lessons and are increasingly able to work independently.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teachers' clear explanations, astute questioning and the provision of valuable practical activities make an important contribution to pupils' conceptual understanding.
- Careful attention to pupils' mathematical vocabulary and quick recall of number facts is instrumental in sharpening their mental mathematics skills.
- Teaching assistants provide particularly good support, in class and in withdrawal groups, for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who experience difficulty in understanding a particular aspect of mathematics.
- In most instances, the effective use of assessment, marking and setting targets ensures that the activities provided in lessons are challenging and matched well to pupils' different learning needs.
- Although lessons are well-managed, there are occasions when teachers concentrate on the learning of one group of pupils, without sufficiently checking the learning of others. When this happens, misconceptions are not always identified and remedied immediately.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Recent improvements to the curriculum, regarding opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in problem-solving situations in mathematics and across the wider curriculum, are beginning to have a positive impact on attainment.
- Regular and accurate assessments made of pupils' learning are effective in identifying the topics where pupils experience difficulty, such as fractions. The information is being used increasingly well to guide future planning and provide a more flexible curriculum adapted to pupils' learning needs.

- Carefully planned and very effectively tutored intervention groups are proving increasingly effective in closing gaps in pupils' understanding and attainment and in accelerating their progress.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning through the use of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly in lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

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

- Your clarity of purpose and involvement in mathematics provide an excellent example of leadership for other members of staff to follow.
- The high quality of monitoring, evaluation, performance management and staff training, carried out by senior staff lie at the heart of the school's good capacity for improvement. However, there are a small number of inconsistencies in feedback for pupils in lessons and through marking that still require attention.
- Leaders' strategic and curriculum planning is enhanced by encouraging the involvement of pupils and acting upon their views.
- Careful analysis of assessments and setting challenging targets makes a vital contribution to improving progress and raising attainment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that teachers check the learning of pupils in all groups in the class to ensure that misconceptions are identified and remedied as quickly as possible
- making more effective use of ICT to enable pupils to consolidate and extend their understanding.

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

As I 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

Colin Smith
Additional Inspector