

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr G Kloska
Headteacher
Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School
Tide Grove
Lawrence Weston
Bristol
BS11 0PA

Dear Mr Kloska

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 1 December 2010 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; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of six lessons and a meeting with a representative of the governing body.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is outstanding.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding.

- Attainment has been significantly above national averages every year since 2006 and, in 2010, every pupil reached at least the level expected by age 11 in mathematics. Significantly, almost 75% reached the higher level. This success is well above what is found nationally.
- In two of the last three years, the progress made by pupils in mathematics has been in the best 2% nationally. This is a considerable achievement. There are no significant differences in the performances of different groups of pupils within the school and all achieve well. For example, pupils who are in the early stages of learning English or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally impressive progress. There are some minor fluctuations between classes and year groups or over time but these are always within very positive trends.

- Pupils are particularly strong in their understanding of basic number skills, their use of precise mathematical vocabulary, and their knowledge of the properties of shape; they have an outstanding awareness of standard and non-standard methods of calculation. Pupils are fluent in mental mathematics. Despite this powerful performance, there is scope for further developing the key skills of estimation and application of knowledge in a range of exploratory and investigative activities.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy mathematics. They speak enthusiastically about challenging activities and discuss and tackle problems with energy. For example, pupils had an extended and lively debate about which was the 'bigger fraction', three eighths or four tenths, which they continued as they left the classroom. Pupils thrive on such rich mathematical dialogue and demonstrate very positive attitudes to the subject.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is outstanding.

- Every teacher was observed teaching mathematics. In each lesson, teaching was either good or outstanding. Good use of relationships, with a very detailed knowledge of each pupil's particular mathematical needs, led to highly personalised and effective questioning. Brisk pace, high expectations and a thoughtful use of targets captured exceptional progress. The use of resources was imaginative, especially in the use of interactive whiteboards. In one class, nine-year-old pupils were happily suggesting formal algebraic formulae to use in a spreadsheet to solve a problem. Other pupils were discussing proportion, ratio and scale to help draw a life-sized giant when they only had his huge glove as a clue. This variety of tasks and challenge is welcomed by pupils.
- Teachers used assessment well. Careful questioning led to accurate assessment which was then used to plan the next sessions. Learning support assistants play a full part in this process. The support offered to pupils who need it is outstanding. Teachers do not just 'deliver' lessons but respond continuously to what the pupils are saying and doing in each session. Marking is up-to-date and developmental. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations and insistence on good work, neat presentation and accuracy.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Despite the obvious strengths outlined above, the curriculum has some gaps. It is broad, balanced and thoughtful and what is covered is taught exceptionally well but a heavy dependence on number and weekly test practice is evident. Similarly, some pupils get limited opportunities to use their obvious skills in open and investigative problems. As a result, pupils are less confident in the key skills of estimation and visualisation. There is no 'Maths Club', for example, despite enthusiasm for one by pupils, and enrichment activities are often corralled into Friday's lessons rather than

being used as starter activities for a sequence of lessons. Some very able pupils in particular would benefit from wider enrichment activities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- As headteacher and in your role as subject leader, you are an enthusiastic and knowledgeable ambassador for mathematics and are well supported by colleagues and governors. The subject is well resourced. Particular strengths are the detailed and ambitious use of target-setting and monitoring procedures. The school does not settle for less than exceptional progress. This ethos, together with the high quality of teaching and teamwork, provides a very strong capacity to improve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the curriculum further by increasing opportunities for investigative and extended problem-solving activities, thereby enriching the wider mathematics curriculum, and ensuring that activities are not isolated
- considering ways of offering extended challenge for all, but especially the more able, via greater enrichment activities and real-life problems.

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

Ceri Morgan
Her Majesty's Inspector