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Mrs A Edmondson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Edmondson

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 22 September 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; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of one lesson; and brief visits to the six other classes and two booster sessions.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Many children join Nursery with mathematical skills that are much lower than is typical for their age. They make good progress so that around three-quarters demonstrate expected levels of skill in number and shape on entry to Key Stage 1. Their calculation skills are weaker.
- Attainment is significantly below average in Key Stage 1, and has shown a downward trend in the last few years. Pupils' progress accelerates during Key Stage 2 to reach average standards in national tests. Provisional data for 2010 continue to show the positive upward trend, and reflect pupils' good progress. Half the cohort attained the higher Level 5 in 2010.
- There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils, with some of the most vulnerable doing particularly well.

- Pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics are less well developed than other areas of the mathematics curriculum. This term sees a new shift in teachers' emphasis away from repetitive exercises towards more imaginative approaches and problem-solving. Lessons observed reflected this approach.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are attentive and collaborate willingly on tasks when given such opportunities. Some pupils know their curricular targets but others do not.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teachers make good use of time: activities are varied and are sequenced well to secure pupils' progress. Positive relationships and skilled management ensure pupils are focused on learning.
- Teachers emphasise correct mathematical vocabulary. In lessons, they pick up clues about pupils' understanding during whole-class question-and-answer sessions, but some are more effective than others at spotting and acting on errors and misconceptions in pupils' written work.
- Although teaching assistants supported pupils' learning well when pupils worked on group or individual tasks, there is scope to make greater use of them in whole-class teaching; for instance in recording targeted pupils' responses. They used practical equipment effectively in booster sessions.
- Teachers keep a varied range of evidence to support their assessments of pupils' progress, although photocopied work on mini-whiteboards might usefully be annotated. Evidence of pupils' progress in using and applying mathematics was more limited.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- A new scheme of work developed for Key Stages 1 and 2 contains objectives, vocabulary and prior learning. Some problem-solving activities are highlighted but no references to information and communication technology exist. The intention, sensibly, is that teachers will add in activities, models, images and resources as the year progresses. Schemes, specifically for the mixed-age classes, are to be developed next.
- The scheme is not supplemented by guidance for teachers on approaches that support pupils' conceptual understanding and help ensure progression in key mathematical ideas, such as place value and proportional reasoning. Pupils interviewed said they find division particularly difficult.
- The progress of all pupils is monitored carefully, and support for those below target is provided by teaching assistants, all of whom are appropriately trained. Additional intervention focuses on those pupils working just below the levels expected for their age.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- The newly appointed senior manager who has responsibility for coordinating mathematics is highly organised and demonstrates a good grasp of how to build on current strengths to improve provision in mathematics further. Early monitoring has informed clear areas for improvement and more is rightly planned as actions in the development plan are implemented. Some success criteria are not easily measured because they resemble aims rather than the desired impact of actions while others need a baseline to be established.
- You monitor pupils' mathematical progress and this informs discussions with each teacher. You have made the most of opportunities for subject-specific training for teachers and teaching assistants, all of whom are reflective and keen to develop their practice further.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. There is a good track record of improvement at Key Stage 2. Capacity to improve further is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- identifying within the new scheme of work:
 - opportunities for all pupils to use and apply mathematics
 - approaches that promote pupils' conceptual understanding including through the use of information and communication technology and practical equipment
- providing guidance for staff on securing progression in key mathematical ideas and on teaching and assessing the use and application of mathematics.

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

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector