

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



9 December 2010

Mr J Lane
Headteacher
Sacred Heart RC Primary School
68 Georges Road
Holloway
London
N7 8JN

Dear Mr Lane

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 with Jane Jones HMI on 26 November 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 two groups of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of five lessons and short visits to four other lessons, the 'Mathletics Club', an 'Every Child Counts' session and the school bank.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- From a starting point which is well below expectations for their age, children in the Nursery and Reception classes make outstanding progress to reach close to average attainment in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy by the end of Reception.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and their attainment is above average by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, together with those who have English as an additional language, make particularly good progress. Evidence from the visit indicates that higher-attaining pupils are not challenged consistently in all lessons. Data from national tests also reflect that they are capable of better progress.

- Learning is good in most lessons, for example, when pupils explored number sequences and created patterns that used negative numbers. However, the starter activity, which focused on adding number bonds to 20, was too easy for many pupils.
- Pupils work successfully in pairs and groups. Year 6 pupils worked together effectively and sustained good concentration in seeking to reduce a budget. The most able pupils found ways of calculating VAT at 17.5% when tackling a more complex version of the task.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teachers' questioning skills are good. They probe pupils' mathematical thinking through, for example, the use of 'Tell me how you solved that problem'. Where necessary, teachers are skilled at reframing questions to support pupils in developing their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts or in extending their answers.
- Pupils in Years 4 and 6 are taught in one class, with two teachers and a higher level teaching assistant. The organisation of these classes is highly effective and a key factor in pupils' good learning and progress.
- Teachers' planning is good; all lessons have a clear learning objective, which is shared with pupils. In the best lessons, group work meets the differing learning needs of pupils, with a very clear focus as to what pupils should learn by the end of the lesson.
- The mental/oral starter is used inconsistently. In the best practice, pupils go to different groups so that activities are matched closely to individual needs. Sometimes, where the mental/oral starter is for the whole class, the learning is, as a number of pupils said, 'Too easy.' In a few lessons, pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet and teaching assistants are not deployed effectively to support and challenge pupils.
- Marking is variable but with examples of good practice where teachers pose questions to challenge pupils' understanding and pupils respond to them. On occasions, errors are not picked up. Evidence from books shows instances of pupils being taught 'tricks' rather than methods that are grounded mathematical understanding.
- Assessment is good. Teachers monitor and track pupils' progress on a day-to-day basis and carry out detailed assessments six times a year. Teachers have a good understanding of which pupils are at risk of falling behind in mathematics and support programmes enable pupils to catch up.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of most pupils, with strengths in provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, together with those learning English as an additional language. It does not consistently meet the potential of higher attainers.

- The 'Mathletics Club' is popular with pupils who enjoy completing questions at the same time as pupils elsewhere in the world. The newly introduced 'Every Child Counts' programme supports effectively the learning of a small number of Year 2 pupils. A recent visit to a pizza restaurant gave pupils exciting first-hand experience of the mathematics involved in making and selling pizzas.
- The transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed and enables pupils to make a smooth transition from their learning in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy to the mathematics curriculum in Year 1.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- The senior leadership team is highly effective in sustaining pupils' good progress and above-average attainment. Self-evaluation is accurate, informed by robust, analytical monitoring of provision and assessment of children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6. As a result, the school knows in great detail how groups are performing, for example by ability, gender and ethnicity, as well as each individual. Senior leaders have rightly included in the current action plan a target to improve the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in national tests.
- Through detailed and thorough analysis of pupils' progress, senior leaders identified that pupils' use of mathematical language has been a barrier to success, particularly at the higher levels in teacher assessments and national tests. As a result, they have introduced a very strong emphasis on developing mathematical vocabulary and understanding, starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in order to improve pupils' skills as they move up the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the consistency of challenge for higher attainers in all mathematics lessons
- ensuring that all teachers focus on developing pupils' understanding of key mathematical concepts, including through their explanations, questioning and marking.

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

David Curtis
Additional Inspector