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Mr D McLeod
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McLeod

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 27 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 lessons and support sessions.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Levels of attainment vary across the school and are average overall. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is average. Of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, a smaller proportion than nationally attains the highest level. In 2010, standards rose to broadly average in Reception but remained below average at the end of Key Stage 1. The school's data show a dip in attainment for the current Year 6 pupils, but a rise for the current Year 5.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress. In 2010, the lowest progress was made by boys with high prior attainment.
- In lessons seen, pupils' learning was satisfactory. Pupils did not receive the consistent challenge and support for them to make faster progress, particularly the higher attainers in a class. They applied themselves

effectively to independent work, although a few sometimes lost concentration during whole-class discussion.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers give clear explanations, prepare lessons carefully and set appropriate expectations for behaviour. Together with the good relationships fostered between teachers and pupils, these contribute to pupils learning satisfactorily.
- Teaching quality varies, with examples of good elements within satisfactory lessons. Strengths of the teaching include the way teachers target questions to individuals to check their knowledge and extend their understanding. Teachers sometimes give pupils opportunities to work with partners, or to explain and assess their own and each other's work.
- Teaching does not consistently challenge and support all pupils, or ensure they understand the purpose of the lesson and how to judge how well they have done. Teachers do not routinely involve every pupil in responding, monitor mathematical correctness, or require pupils to think hard enough in advance of an activity about its potential outcomes. Some activities extend skills but do not develop understanding well enough.
- Marking identifies much correct work but misses opportunities to give guidance on how to improve. Pupils have targets in various aspects of mathematics but some are too easy, particularly for higher attainers. Leaders rightly recognise the need for an improved system for involving pupils in assessing their progress against targets and in lessons, and have begun to develop one.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The curriculum provides an adequate range of content, so ensures pupils develop skills, for example in number. It includes an interesting variety of activities. Nevertheless, it does not build up well enough the process skills pupils need to enable them to develop their reasoning and to use and apply mathematics. Planning does not ensure that activities specifically develop pupils' understanding of the mathematical concepts they are learning. Pupils have little opportunity for hands-on use of computers to explore shapes or graphs.
- Activities are targeted effectively for different levels of attainment within each class, although they do not consistently extend all pupils, especially the higher attainers.
- Some interventions are used successfully to support pupils who fall behind. They are not negotiated well enough between senior leaders, mathematics leaders and class teachers or informed by data to give the providers of the intervention a sharp focus and enable impact to be evaluated. The high absence rate of some pupils has reduced the impact.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

Leadership and management in mathematics are satisfactory.

- Leaders have an accurate overall picture of the quality of provision, but there is no system for basing this on regular lesson observations, checking of pupils' work and lesson planning, or collection of pupils' views. Through recent monitoring of pupils' work, mathematics leaders have identified useful areas for development in teaching, although fewer in relation to the progression within the curriculum.
- Lessons observed jointly during the inspection were judged accurately. However, some previous judgements based on the school's criteria appear generous when too little account was taken of the progress of groups of pupils.
- Data on pupils' attainment are used for keeping track of whether each one makes the expected progress during each year. However, the system does not show readily pupils' progress across a key stage or how well groups of pupils are progressing.
- You, the deputy headteacher and the mathematics leaders have correctly identified that provision and outcomes in mathematics are priorities for development in the school. You have recognised that plans for improvement have not been sharply focused, and have begun revising them. The impetus you have already instilled since joining the school at the start of this term and the examples of accurate evaluation show that the school has satisfactory capacity for moving forward.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the quality of teaching to consistently good through:
 - a greater emphasis on developing understanding
 - ensuring challenge and support for all, especially the higher attainers in each class
 - making sure that targets are challenging, and are used to inform teaching and assessment
 - involving pupils more in assessing the depth of their understanding in lessons and against targets
- using data more effectively to:
 - monitor the progress of individuals and groups across key stages
 - inform teaching and plan the help given through intervention
- sharpening the evaluation of the impact of teaching and intervention through observation, scrutiny of pupils' work, data analysis and gathering of pupils' views.

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

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector