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4 January 2011

Mrs S Thorpe
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Thorpe

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 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and observations of parts of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Pupils start school with varying levels of knowledge and skills. They make good progress in Reception and Years 1 and 2 because learning is active, practical and set in real-life contexts. Progress is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Attainment in Year 6 is above average but dipped in the 2010 national tests.
- In recent years, girls have performed considerably less well than boys in Year 6 but the gap is closing. The school has identified that girls in the middle ability range are those most at risk of underachievement. They tend to be passive learners and often lack confidence in their own ability.
- Pupils learn to use strategies and techniques correctly, for example when using different methods of calculation. Their understanding of the

mathematical concepts that underpin some of these methods is less secure.

- Pupils solve routine problems and enjoy carrying out investigations but these do not always fully stretch the most able pupils.
- In lessons, pupils work hard and most enjoy mathematics. A few older pupils say that they enjoy lessons less when they work from textbooks. Younger pupils are well equipped with the skills to learn independently and enjoy working things out for themselves.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding in Reception and Key Stage 1 and develops pupils' understanding of concepts effectively through an exciting range of practical learning activities. It is not as consistently good in Key Stage 2.
- An improvement in the teaching is teachers' reduced reliance on textbooks and worksheets. A recently acquired textbook-based scheme of work still forms the basis of teachers' planning but is being adapted more readily to suit pupils' needs. The school has rightly identified that Key Stage 2 pupils would benefit from more opportunities to learn and practise skills in exciting, real-life contexts.
- The work in pupils' books shows that tasks are sometimes not sufficiently fine-tuned to meet the needs of different groups within the class, for instance when high ability pupils do the same work as those of average ability before being given extension tasks.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support in lessons and through additional interventions, either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. The impact of these interventions on pupils' progress is not always evaluated clearly.
- There is scope to sharpen the use of assessment systems to ensure consistently good progress for all groups of pupils. The school has identified this as a priority for improvement over the next year. Marking varies in quality. It is often exemplary in Key Stage 1 but does not always help older pupils to improve their work.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has an appropriate policy for teaching calculations which embodies progression in skills and understanding. The school uses a scheme of work which is based on the revised framework for mathematics. This is enhanced by a range of other resources, including some from internet websites.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own monitoring show that there is too much repetition of work from year to year. The subject leader has

identified that this is often because pupils have forgotten previously learned concepts.

- Using and applying mathematical knowledge and skills is a developing area. Pupils have good opportunities to solve problems and carry out investigations but these are often additional activities rather than integral to the current unit of work. Progression in this aspect of the curriculum has been highlighted as a priority for improvement.
- In discussions, older pupils found it hard to give examples of exciting lessons or opportunities for practical activities in the classroom, around the school or in the grounds. However, photographic evidence shows that pupils had great fun doing an interesting variety of activities and investigations during a recent mathematics week.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- The school has focused successfully on improving reading and writing over the last three years. Senior leaders have now identified key priorities for improvement in mathematics. These are set against clear, challenging and measurable targets, including raising the attainment of middle ability girls and ensuring consistently good teaching across the school. All staff share your aspirations and are keen to improve their practice.
- The school has appropriate systems for tracking each pupil's progress from term to term. These enable you to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving and discuss, at termly pupil progress meetings with each class teacher, any pupils who are not making good progress, the reasons for this and what actions are to be implemented.
- The subject leader is relatively new in post but has already begun to monitor the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' workbooks. This work has identified some issues with progression in the curriculum. The monitoring of lessons and pupils' work does not focus rigorously enough on evaluating the learning and progress of different groups within the class, such as girls, the more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- accelerating pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 so that it is consistently good in each year group, focusing particularly on girls' achievement
- ensuring clear progression in conceptual development in all aspects of mathematics and embedding opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills within each unit of work
- increasing the rigour with which subject and senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning for different groups of pupils and its impact on their progress.

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

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector