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Mr H Weir
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Weir

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 11 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding.

- In each of the last three years, attainment has been high and progress well above that found nationally, placing the school among the top 20% of all primary schools for mathematics. Every child reached the expected level at age 11 in the 2010 national tests and almost two-thirds reached the higher level. A similarly impressive picture at age 7 shows attainment to also be above national averages. There is no significant difference between the achievement of various groups of pupils.
- This positive picture of end-of-key-stage achievement also shows some variation between different aspects of mathematics and in different classes. The school acknowledges that results have reached a plateau, albeit at a high level, in recent years.

- Particular strengths are strong basic number work, including knowledge of multiplication tables, and an understanding of decimals and fractions and accurate use of mathematical vocabulary. Pupils are confident and accurate in the way they calculate with numbers. Opportunities for pupils, especially high ability pupils, to apply these strong number skills in a range of contexts and in solving complex problems are less frequent. As a consequence, the application of skills is good rather than outstanding.
- Pupils show high levels of enthusiasm for the subject and enjoy their mathematics. They contribute well in lessons and enjoy high challenge when it is available. They tackle problems with energy and support each other in their thinking. The presentation of mathematical work is good.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Although teaching is good overall, some variation exists between classes. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. They plan sessions in detail, with clear lesson objectives and success criteria in the main. The pace of learning is judged well, although plenary sessions are occasionally clipped in length, thus preventing a fuller discussion of the mathematics learnt.
- Teachers use questioning well and encourage pupils to use precise mathematical vocabulary. In general, teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use technology well to support learning although the depth of their subject knowledge varies.
- The careful use of assessment is well established throughout the school. Teachers involve pupils effectively in self-assessment and the pupils themselves are rigorous and accurate in what they know and need to work on. This knowledge is converted into useful targets. Marking is up to date, accurate and helpful.
- A strong team of teaching assistants supports pupils who need additional help, mostly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but occasionally the more able.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- A focus on core number skills is central to the well-planned curriculum which is enhanced by booster groups and additional activities, such as occasional off-site sessions for more able pupils. There is some variation in how extension activities are used and, in a few classes, an emphasis on completion of tasks takes precedence over deeper understanding.
- A particular strength of the curriculum is how teachers carefully develop pupils' accurate use of mathematical vocabulary. In one Year 2 class for example, pupils were happily using words such as 'irregular hexagon' correctly to describe a shape. Similarly, in Year 5, pupils were debating the importance of being able to convert fractions to decimals in real life.

- Homework is set weekly. It is more often a revision of what has been covered in the class rather than problem-solving or investigative in nature. Some helpful links are made between mathematics and other subjects through some active cross-curricular sessions.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Some significant changes in teaching personnel and the mathematics curriculum during the past year have been managed well and high attainment has been maintained. The subject leader shows a well organised and enthusiastic approach to the role.
- A regular programme of lesson observations, workbook and planning scrutiny is used to identify any further professional development. Any required training is then organised well, often through the federation with other nearby schools. This is an impressive process. Performance data are also used to identify school priorities. Governors are involved fully. The school is well resourced for mathematics.
- The school has an accurate view of relative strengths and priorities: capacity to improve is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the opportunity for all pupils, but especially the more able, to use and apply their strong number skills in wider problem-solving activities
- tackling the variation in the quality of teaching between classes, particularly in teachers' subject knowledge, through enhanced professional development activity.

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