

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs N Powrie  
Headteacher  
The Neville Lovett Community School and Continuing Education Centre  
St Anne's Grove  
Fareham  
Hampshire  
PO14 1JJ

Dear Mrs Powrie

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 31 January and 1 February 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 students; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; analyses of students' work; and observation of eight lessons (including three joint observations with senior staff).

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

#### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Attainment has been low for the last three years but it is currently improving rapidly. The progress made by students is now securely satisfactory and is also improving. Underachievement is being addressed through the successful application of a range of strategies. The performance of students currently in Year 11, as demonstrated in GCSE mathematics in November 2010, is already in line with that of the previous cohort at the end of their Key Stage 4.
- Students work happily and successfully in lessons and many enjoy mathematics. Their capacity to reflect critically on their learning is not well developed.

- No formal mechanisms are in place to gather students' views about their work in mathematics.

### **Quality of teaching in mathematics**

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teaching across the department is consistently satisfactory and it is improving. Elements of good practice are evident in many lessons. For example, teachers frequently gauge the quality of students' learning and use the information obtained to inform teaching and steer learning.
- Books are marked frequently and thoroughly. Teachers' comments are constructive and some good advice and targets for improvement are provided. Formal assessments are regular, and they are used to monitor the progress of individual students and whole classes.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well in lessons to support students' learning in mathematics. Students are encouraged to use ICT for homework to practise skills, and for revision.
- There is a palpable sense of teachers enjoying developing fresh approaches and refining existing methods. Many techniques being used in the classroom this year are still new and are not yet fully developed, but they are already having a positive effect on students' achievement.
- Sometimes teachers do not give students chances to explain their thinking, make mistakes and learn from the process of puzzling their own way through a problem.

### **Quality of the curriculum in mathematics**

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Opportunities for all students to use and apply mathematics are built into the schemes of work. At Key Stage 3, students have the chance to undertake longer pieces of investigative work each term, and problem-solving activities are included in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- The range of qualifications on offer meets students' needs well. About half take GCSE statistics (some before Year 11) and they achieve well. Some students excel in mathematics, and links with a local college give them the opportunity to take GCSE additional mathematics.
- All students in Year 11 sat mathematics GCSE in November. This new strategy is designed to improve ambition, give students a sense of the realities of external examinations and to obtain substantial diagnostic information about current achievement. The results have been encouraging and the department has reorganised all teaching groups to focus support on maximising students' chances of improving their grades when everyone but the two who obtained A\* grades re-sit in the summer.
- Schemes of work are detailed and useful. However, informal discussions about approaches to the teaching of topics and teaching methodology, although useful, are not captured in the schemes of work.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics**

Leadership and management in mathematics are good.

- The head of department is leading improvements this year with vigour and determination. This is leading to improved levels of challenge and accountability in the department, yet maintaining good morale.
- The improvements in the quality of teaching and in students' achievement are a direct result of the close and effective partnership of the head of department and senior staff. Your vision, as a new headteacher, for the whole school is reflected in the drive forward in the mathematics department.
- Appropriate priorities for improvement in the department have been identified through work with the local authority's mathematics adviser. Good-quality action plans have been developed, and areas for improvement are being addressed promptly and effectively.
- The quality of teaching in the department is closely monitored and consistency of practice is prioritised. This contributes strongly to the effectiveness of the changes introduced this year.
- Not all of the strategies have had time to bring about the improvements hoped for, but they are being introduced resolutely and with close attention given to regular and thorough evaluation of their impact. This rigour, coupled with rising attainment demonstrated already, underpins the department's good capacity to improve further.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring feedback from monitoring of teaching includes guidance to help staff refine their new teaching methods
- enabling students to identify misapprehensions and problem areas for themselves in lessons and, with the support and encouragement of teachers, exploring solutions for themselves
- obtaining students' views on how the quality of their learning in mathematics may be improved further
- building into the schemes of work specific guidance on how students best learn key ideas in 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

**Alan Taylor-Bennett**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**