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Mr I Cameron
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cameron

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 3 March 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 two lessons and brief visits to seven others.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children join the school with lower skills than is typical for their age, particularly in calculating and shape, space and measures. They are catching up on these areas by the time they are five. Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress, but attainment remains below average.
- Attainment in Key Stage 2 is also significantly below average although it is rising. The proportion of pupils who reach the standard expected of 11-year-olds, Level 4, is increasing but relatively few reach Level 5. Pupils' progress was inadequate in 2008 and 2009 but satisfactory in 2010, marking the start of an upward trend that is reflected in the school's data.
- More than a quarter of pupils join the school at times other than in Nursery or Reception, which is much higher than average. Many soon

settle to make similar progress to their peers, albeit often from lower starting points.

- Pupils' knowledge and skills are stronger than their understanding of mathematical concepts. They tackle short problems, successfully in the main, but have less experience of more complex or investigative activities.
- Behaviour is generally good: pupils are cooperative and most are prepared to 'have a go' although their recall of earlier learning is not always secure and a minority are passive. Some pupils said that their work is easy. Poor attendance of too many pupils impedes their progress.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching is improving. Most is satisfactory and some is good. Many lessons have good features such as activities that are well matched to the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils, use of practical resources and discussion between 'learning partners'. Teaching assistants are generally well deployed to support particular groups within lessons and there is some targeted small group and one-to-one support.
- Inconsistencies and weaknesses in the teaching include too much talking or prompting by the teacher, missed opportunities to develop and probe pupils' thinking by building on their answers, and a lack of appropriate challenge for all pupils with a clear focus on conceptual understanding.
- The use of assessment is developing with some examples of good practice; for example, in the dialogue between teacher and pupil following marking. Teachers are becoming skilled at adapting their lesson plans in the light of pupils' learning. They endeavour to use questioning to check understanding and mini plenary sessions to make teaching points.
- Pupils are increasingly involved in self-assessment through strategies such as 'I can ...' statements and smiley faces, but practice varies across the school. Teachers are at different stages in using the *Assessing Pupils' Progress* materials to record pupils' attainment.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The Primary National Strategy framework forms the basis of teachers' lesson planning with improved flexibility in meeting pupils' needs through the better use of ongoing assessment. However, more checks are required to ensure good progression through the two years that pupils spend in the mixed age Year 5/6 sets. Guidance on progression in calculation has been a focus of recent work with teaching assistants but not yet with teachers.
- Pupils have some opportunities to solve problems, but their skills in using and applying mathematics are not developed explicitly through a range of problem-solving and investigative activities. Senior leaders appreciate that cross-curricular topics offer interesting contexts for applying mathematics.

- The degree to which information and communication technology (ICT) is used to support pupils' learning in mathematics varies according to individual teachers' ICT skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

Leadership and management in mathematics are satisfactory.

- The senior manager who leads mathematics has a good grasp of, and an organised approach to, the role. A systematic cycle of lesson observation, feedback to teachers, support and follow-up on areas for development is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching. Weaknesses are challenged. The subject leader's evaluation of lessons observed jointly was accurate and placed appropriate weight on pupils' progress. Greater attention to mathematical details could strengthen feedback further.
- Data on pupils' attainment and progress, analysed for cohorts and groups of pupils, show that attainment is rising across the school and in specific areas where the school has focused attention, for example, on calculation in the Early Years Foundation Stage. While the analysis helps gauge the impact on outcomes of actions taken, a range of monitoring information is not being exploited to pinpoint specific weaknesses in the teaching or the curriculum to enable quicker intervention and improvement.
- The mathematics action plan is satisfactory. It identifies suitable priorities and actions but success criteria and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation lack sharpness. The school has drawn appropriately on support from the local authority's consultants.
- Capacity to improve further is satisfactory and is reflected in the improvements secured over the last 18 months, although there is some distance still to go if all pupils are to be well equipped for their futures.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing pupils' achievement, especially the more able pupils
- raising the quality of teaching by providing guidance for staff on approaches that promote conceptual understanding, including practical activities and use of ICT, and increasing the attention to mathematical detail when feeding back to teachers on their lessons
- ensuring that all pupils have good opportunities to use and apply mathematics
- making better use of information from monitoring to identify and act on emerging issues in teaching and the curriculum.

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

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector