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Rev Julie Stanton
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Dear Rev Stanton

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 8 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is just below average. It was average when they left school at the end of Year 6 in 2010. Some of these pupils had joined the school quite recently, and some had special educational needs and/or disabilities. When these factors are considered, the progress of these pupils was good. Observations of lessons and assessment records confirmed that pupils are continuing to make good progress. Pupils enjoy the subject, as observed when Year 1 pupils took delight in programming a robot to move around a grid. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils enjoyed exploring numbers between 10 and 20 using a grid in the playground. In another class, a pupil who had a specific learning difficulty made significant progress using information and communication technology (ICT) to explore a problem involving coordinates.

- Pupils show understanding when talking about mathematical problems. For example, pupils of high ability discussed methods to compare the sizes of fractions and different ways of solving a problem involving pattern and numbers.
- Pupils who have received extra support describe being much more confident in the subject and, for example, understand better the methods for short and long multiplication. As their confidence has increased, so has their enjoyment of the subject.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers undertake thorough assessment of pupils' attainment twice each year, using good diagnostic tests. These are used well to identify pupils who need additional support, either because they are falling behind or to provide extra stimulation for pupils who are identified as high attaining. The assessments also inform the way pupils are grouped in classes to ensure that they are challenged and taught at an appropriate level. These groupings are also changed between mathematics topics because teachers know their pupils well and recognise that their attainment is not uniform across the subject. Teachers use mini-whiteboards well to check pupils' answers to problems. However, some opportunities for day-to-day assessment are missed as teachers do not ask enough open questions to gain insight into how pupils are thinking.
- Teaching has pace and a sense of fun. Activities are adjusted effectively for the abilities of groups of pupils. Teachers explain mathematics well, as noted when a teacher modelled number bonds to 10 and encouraged the Year 1 pupils to explain patterns from the results. Teachers use precise mathematical vocabulary and encourage its use by pupils; however, this is sometimes hindered by key words not being displayed.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers follow programmes which reflect an appropriate balance between number, shape and space and data handling. More able pupils are provided with varied extension work which may involve them engaging in work for higher year groups or undertaking investigative tasks.
- Teachers use some opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics. However, this practice is too varied between teachers as no overall guidance for how this is developed from year to year is provided. Some good use is made of mathematics in other subjects, such as data handling in science and coordinates in geography. Investigating and exploring within mathematics for all pupils are less well developed. ICT is sometimes used effectively, but pupils' experience again varies between classes.
- Pupils' experience of mathematics is enriched by out-of-class activities, such as when the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils visit the local park

and when Year 6 pupils design a mathematics trail for younger pupils. Pupils also practise their mathematics skills in an engineering club.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

Leadership and management in mathematics are good.

- Leaders in the subject are particularly effective in the way they monitor the progress of every pupil, and take effective action to support when pupils fall behind or need further enrichment. Where one-to-one additional support is needed, teachers normally provide this themselves. All teachers have a clear determination that pupils should succeed, and plan conscientiously for each pupil's needs.
- The subject leaders support other teachers well. They monitor teaching on a regular cycle and scrutinise pupils' books. At times, they join in teaching with colleagues to share good practice. Teaching assistants have also been able to develop into high-quality practitioners. The good quality of teaching that has resulted illustrates the good capacity to improve further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a more consistent and planned approach to using and applying mathematics and to the use of ICT
- fostering wider questioning styles where teachers make more use of open questions and so improve their day-to-day assessment of how pupils are thinking 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

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector