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Miss A Nightingale  
Headteacher  
Gaskell Community Primary School  
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Dear Miss Nightingale

### **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 15 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, three intervention groups and part of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

#### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children enter Nursery with knowledge and skills that are significantly below those expected for their age. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Reception, their attainment has improved considerably to broadly average in knowledge of numbers and counting but is below average in calculation and shape, space and measures.
- Pupils' learning and progress are good in Key Stage 1. Attainment is rising and is currently only slightly below average by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 and good in Years 5 and 6. Attainment has improved over recent years and is only slightly below average by the end of Year 6.

- In the past, girls, average attaining pupils and those from White British backgrounds have performed better than other groups. However, by increasing the challenge for more able pupils and improving the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English, former gaps in achievement are disappearing quickly.
- Pupils' investigation and reasoning skills are not as secure as other areas of mathematics. This is because of limited opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in problem-solving situations.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics, behave well in lessons and are able to work productively, without direct supervision. They present their work with care and show maturity in striving to achieve their targets.

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

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers' good use of assessment ensures that the activities provided are challenging and closely matched to pupils' different learning needs.
- Teachers make excellent use of displays to develop and extend pupils' vocabulary, to help them to remember number rules and facts and to encourage them to learn independently.
- Teachers make effective use of resources, such as practical equipment and interactive whiteboards, to improve pupils' understanding, for example of how to read measurement scales accurately.
- The good ratio of adults to pupils ensures that pupils' oral responses are checked and that lessons are adapted to strengthen their understanding. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to check pupils' written responses, particularly when they are working independently, to ensure that any misconceptions are quickly identified and remedied.
- Teachers ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve by providing individual targets, encouraging self-assessment through a system of traffic lights, and providing pointers for improvement, in most instances when marking their work.

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

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Well-written calculation and mental mathematics policies ensure that consistent methods are taught and that pupils are able to build successfully on their prior learning in these areas of mathematics.
- The curriculum offers only limited opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems, in lessons and across the wider curriculum.
- The curriculum is sensitively adapted to cater for the needs of pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs

and/or disabilities. Additional provision for the gifted and talented pupils is helping a greater proportion of pupils to reach higher levels.

- Well-organised intervention programmes make an important contribution to pupils' progression in mathematics by helping to close any gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding.

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

Leadership and management in mathematics are good.

- Your involvement, as headteacher, in analysing data and checking the quality of teaching, makes an important contribution to improvement, particularly at a time of staff changes.
- Effective systems of observing lessons, scrutinising pupils' work and seeking their views are instrumental in achieving consistency, for example, in marking and in providing challenge and additional support. However, inconsistencies in developing pupils' problem-solving skills have not been identified in the school improvement plan.
- Monitoring and reviewing pupils' progress and setting challenging targets are influential factors in raising achievement. The school's good capacity for improvement is evident in the increased rate of progress and rising trends in mathematics over recent years.

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

- increasing the rate of progress in Years 3 and 4
- improving pupils' investigation and problem-solving skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum
- ensuring that pupils' understanding is regularly checked in all lessons to make certain that misconceptions are identified and remedied promptly.

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

**Colin Smith**  
**Additional Inspector**