

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr R Leigh
Headteacher
Dorchester St Birinus CofE School
Dorchester
Wallingford
Oxfordshire
OX10 7HR

Dear Mr Leigh

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 29 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy mathematics lessons and there is a buzz of activity when they work in groups or pairs to investigate problems. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 enthusiastically measured the capacity of different containers and worked out how many hair washes they could get from one bottle of shampoo. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 excitedly competed in a game which heightened their understanding of when it is more appropriate to do mental or written calculations or to use a calculator.
- Pupils' written work, while mostly accurate, shows that they give too little attention to setting out calculations neatly and precisely.
- Attainment varies from year to year due to the small numbers in each year group. In the Year 6 national tests, it has dipped from above average to average levels over the last three years. The current whole-school focus

on raising attainment is paying dividends and pupils currently in Year 6 are on course for well above average attainment.

- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and build on this very well in Years 1 and 2. In recent years, progress has been less marked in Years 3 to 6 but recent assessment data show that the majority are now making good progress in Key Stage 2. Pupils made good gains in learning in the lessons observed.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support through one-to-one tuition and well-planned interventions for small groups. They quickly gain confidence and this helps them to progress at a good pace.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Good teaching was seen in each of the four classes. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and ages within each class. Teachers often tailor activities to meet the needs of four or five different groups. They review their planning and amend the next day's activities if pupils need to consolidate learning before moving on.
- Younger pupils have a rich diet of practical activities that enables them to use and develop their knowledge and skills in real-life contexts. An emphasis on this style of learning has increased in Key Stage 2, where, until recently, teachers have relied more heavily on textbooks or worksheet activities. Nevertheless, all pupils are given good opportunities to solve problems that relate to everyday situations.
- Skilful questioning by teachers and teaching assistants teases out pupils' understanding as the lesson progresses. This enables teachers to address misconceptions and provide further reinforcement where necessary. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide focused support for pupils, based on a secure understanding of key mathematical concepts.
- The school has rightly identified marking and the setting of individual curricular targets as areas for improvement. The good practice that exists in some classes is not fully embedded across the school.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The planned curriculum is based around a commercial scheme which provides appropriate coverage of key concepts and skills, supplemented by a range of additional resources from which teachers select to meet the needs of different groups. A review of the curriculum and resources is underway and is the main priority in the subject improvement plan.
- As part of this review, teachers are seeking ways to integrate more purposeful and enjoyable opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematical knowledge and skills within each unit of work. For example, three able Year 6 pupils tackled an open-ended 'Lunar Theme Park

Challenge' which demanded the application of a range of skills. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that they have too few opportunities to do similar work as part of their typical weekly diet of mathematics.

- A closer focus on monitoring pupils' progress from term to term has led to more accurate identification of individual pupils' specific needs and the provision of carefully planned intervention strategies, which include one-to-one tuition by a qualified teacher. These are already having a good impact with evidence of accelerated progress for some pupils.
- The most able pupils in Year 6 are given tasks that extend their learning beyond that which is normally taught in the primary curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

Leadership and management in mathematics are satisfactory.

- Since your appointment in January 2011, you have taken prompt action to review the teaching of mathematics in line with the stated aims of the school improvement plan. The early fruits of this work are already evident, for example in the more practical approaches to learning at Key Stage 2.
- You are providing good support to the newly appointed subject leader, working in tandem to review the curriculum and the quality of teaching to implement new strategies to accelerate progress. The subject leader's role in driving improvement is at an early stage of development.
- You have introduced more challenging targets for pupils to achieve by Year 6 and more frequent assessments to monitor pupils' progress. These are giving you and the teachers a much clearer picture of where interventions are needed to boost pupils' understanding. The analysis of gaps in pupils' learning, for example through scrutiny of responses to test questions and teachers' end-of-unit assessments, is also in the early stages of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- integrating more frequent, carefully planned opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematical knowledge and skills within daily mathematics lessons and through other subjects
- developing the role of the subject leader in monitoring the quality of teaching and the curriculum and using the information gained to drive improvements in teaching, assessment 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

Carole Skinner

Additional Inspector