

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



6 May 2011

Mr M O'Brien
Headteacher
St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
Gorseway, off Foliage Rd
Brinnington
Stockport
SK5 8AR

Dear Mr O'Brien

Ofsted 2010–11 good practice study: primary mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 5 May 2011 to look at your work in mathematics, with a particular focus on arithmetic.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting as well as wider dissemination of good practice. 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.

Evidence was gathered through interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons and five part lessons.

Features of good practice

- Outstanding leadership and management are reflected in the rigorous evaluation of teaching and learning and the exceptionally high staff commitment towards improvement. These factors lie at the heart of pupils' excellent achievement in developing confidence and fluency in arithmetic and problem solving.
- The very carefully structured curriculum ensures that pupils develop the skills of arithmetic systematically and acquire a clear understanding of the value and application of different methods of calculation, leading to a secure grasp of standard algorithms.
- The quality of teaching is often outstanding, particularly the effectiveness with which teachers explain, model and illustrate mathematical operations. The high level of challenge in lessons and the accurate match of work to pupils' different levels of understanding, enable all of them to learn successfully.

- Teachers use a wide variety of stimulating approaches, including games and practical activities, which pupils find interesting and engaging. As a result, they are highly motivated to learn.
- The school's highly effective approaches to assessing learning, tracking progress, setting targets and providing support through intervention, ensure that teachers, teaching assistants and pupils understand the levels attained and what needs to be done to reach the next stage.
- Careful nurturing of children's calculation skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and developing their understanding of crucial concepts, such as place value and inverse operations in Key Stages 1 and 2 enable pupils to work flexibly, select methods appropriately and solve problems logically by the time they reach Year 6.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making greater use of approximating and estimating, as a precursor to calculating, to help pupils to gauge the reasonability of their answers
- developing pupils' understanding of long division further, for those in Years 5 and 6, who are ready to calculate using larger numbers.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics at St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School.

As I 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 will be sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Colin Smith
Additional Inspector