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13 May 2011

Mrs S Williams
Headteacher
St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Williams

Ofsted 2011–12 good practice survey: primary mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 4 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 collected through: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons.

Features of good practice

- Insightful leadership is informed by excellent subject knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn. The school's philosophy is firmly focused on developing a deep understanding of processes, rather than just solving problems and getting the right answer. As a result, pupils have no fear of 'getting it wrong' as this is accepted as part of learning.
- Progression in learning is assured by consistent approaches to teaching arithmetic throughout the school, based on rigorous planning within each year group and clear guidance for teachers and learning support assistants.
- Very effective daily teaching of mental and oral strategies reinforces pupils' confidence and competence in handling numbers and understanding concepts such as inverse operations and divisibility rules.
- Throughout the school, pupils enjoy a wide variety of activities where they learn, use and apply mathematics in interesting and meaningful everyday contexts. Teachers also make effective links with other subjects, for

example when 'Winnie the Witch', previously encountered in a literacy lesson, visited Year 2 pupils and asked them to help her share and group skulls, newts' eyes and lizards for her spells.

- The correct use of mathematical vocabulary is given high profile throughout the school and this enables pupils to develop good understanding of key concepts and fluency in explaining their learning.
- Learning is greatly enhanced by numerous opportunities for pupils to discuss and explain their reasoning and chosen strategies, both with 'talking partners' and in whole-class sessions.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy mathematics lessons. They participate with enthusiasm, are keen to offer ideas and demonstrate quickness of thought, flexibility in tackling problems and persistence when faced with tricky calculations.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more consistent approaches to marking pupils' work and involving pupils in assessing their own progress.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics at St Thomas More RC 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

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector