

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



14 November 2011

Mr M Lawn
Headteacher
Baldersby St James C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Baldersby St James
Thirsk
YO7 4PT

Dear Mr Lawn

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 November 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.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Due to the small numbers in different year groups, achievement can fluctuate from year to year. Pupils usually start school with mathematical knowledge and skills in line with what is expected for their age. Skills in calculations and shape, space and measure are often lower. Children make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage so that by the end of the Reception Year, attainment is usually above average.
- At Key Stage 1, attainment has remained above average. However, at Key Stage 2, it has fluctuated and has been broadly average overall, reflecting satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to well-tailored support provided by teaching assistants.

- Following recent changes in staffing, rates of progress have started to improve in Key Stage 2. Learning seen in lessons along with careful assessment of pupils' progress indicate that the school is on track to raise attainment to above average.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They enjoy mathematics, particularly when practical activities are involved. Pupils are keen to learn as they say mathematics is important to them as they grow up.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, activities are well planned to allow time for children to work with an adult or to initiate their own activities. The indoor and outdoor spaces are both well used, resources are up to date and are chosen to stimulate and excite young children. The use of numbers or shapes is planned well into activities so that, for example, counting is a regular part of children's learning.
- Strengths in teaching include positive relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils. Teachers model mathematical vocabulary well and emphasise its correct use to pupils. Lessons include opportunities for collaborative work and, through the recent introduction of 'talk partners', pupils are beginning to discuss their ideas and are in the early stages of challenging each other.
- Teachers plan activities that ensure pupils acquire knowledge and skills, providing some opportunities to tackle real-life problems. The use of the outdoors is an additional stimulant. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 divide different varieties of bulbs to ensure that the same number of each variety are planted in each pot. However, skills learnt are not used often enough in problem solving and pupils are insufficiently challenged to achieve the higher levels.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly with comments that help pupils to understand their next steps in learning. This has been an area of focus for the school.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to work with individual or groups of pupils. They play an important role in mathematics lessons and are well trained. Initiatives to raise the quality of teaching are proving to be successful, particularly in Key Stage 2, but there has not been sufficient time yet to see the success of these changes on attainment.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The school uses the Primary National Strategy materials for planning a broad and balanced, well-organised mathematics curriculum. Mathematics is taught as a discrete subject and sometimes through data handling in science but is not often used in other subjects. Planning for mixed-age

classes is well developed and supports learning for different groups of pupils in the same class.

- Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards, for example to stimulate pupils' interest at the start of an activity. However, pupils have very few opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills, including exploring mathematics through a range of information and communication technology (ICT) resources and using ICT as part of independent learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- In the spring term 2011, the school implemented a range of strategies to ensure that attainment rises and pupils' progress in mathematics improves. Regular assessment followed by monitoring and tracking the pupils' progress already indicates that the changes are effective. Pupils are responding positively and welcome the improvements with enthusiasm.
- Monitoring includes lesson observations and work scrutiny. Peer observation and co-coaching have recently been introduced. The school recognises that more in-depth use of data is needed by staff so that teachers can tailor planning for pupils' individual needs as well as monitoring the progress of pupils throughout intervention programmes.
- The drive to raise achievement has been coupled with continuous professional development for all staff as they take on board the changes and further planned training reflects a whole-school commitment to continued improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills to solve a wide range of real-life problems
- ensuring consistent challenge for higher-attaining pupils
- increasing the application of mathematics across the curriculum
- ensuring that pupils use ICT as a tool to explore mathematics and to develop their independent learning skills.

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

Sue Sharkey
Additional Inspector