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Mr B Grzegorzek  
Headteacher  
Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School  
Greenford Road  
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Dear Mr Grzegorzek

### **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 7 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 joint observation with you of three lessons, two of which were streamed groups and one was a mixed-attainment class.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

#### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children join the school with skills that are sometimes lower than typical for their age, particularly in language and communication.
- Attainment in the national Key Stage 2 tests is above average, although not significantly so. The proportion of pupils who reach the standard expected of 11-year-olds, Level 4, is higher than that nationally but the proportion reaching Level 5 in mathematics is average. The majority of pupils make at least the progress expected of them during Key Stage 2. In 2011, for example, nine tenths of Year 6 pupils had made a minimum of two levels of progress which is above average.
- Rates of progress are very similar for all groups but the school is particularly successful with boys and girls who are low attainers at the end

of Year 2. Those pupils eligible for free school meals and those deemed by the school to need additional support generally make the same progress as their peers although this was not the case in 2011 where their rate of progress was slightly slower.

- The school has a strong focus on extending its most able pupils as it has recognised that these pupils could achieve more than has been the case previously. Early impact of this work is seen in the doubling of the proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining Level 5 in the 2011 mathematics test.
- Able pupils' knowledge and skills are stronger than their understanding of mathematical concepts, as seen in the discussion on fractions. Having 'forgotten the rules' some found initial difficulty in beginning to solve unfamiliar problems.
- Pupils' engagement in mathematics lessons is excellent: pupils are always prepared to try. Most present their work very carefully although a few need encouragement to present a coherent record of their work. Occasionally, a casual attitude to graphicacy spoils their written work.

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

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- The use of assessment in lessons is developing well. For example, the impact of the school's recent work on starter activities was evident in the planned way pupils' ability to double one- and two-digit numbers was reinforced. At the same time, a 'loop game' ensured that not only were all pupils included but also that pupils' reading skills were encouraged through the oral part of the task.
- Other good features of the teaching include the range of resources and variety of tasks used to engage pupils' interest. Recent professional development activities to improve pupils' direct access to information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons have clearly had an impact, with some good use observed.
- Excellent classroom organisation and detailed planning ensure smooth transitions between sections of the lesson. Pupils respond well to group and paired activities but opportunities are sometimes missed to monitor the conversations of all pairs, particularly when pupils are seated 'on the carpet'.
- Lesson planning is readily adapted within the classroom to allow for necessary interventions. For example, when errors in notation and careless recording of steps were picked up in a lesson, the teacher intervened to remind pupils of what was required. Occasionally, however, pupils are presented with too wide a choice of possible strategies to solve questions.

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

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The Primary National Strategy framework forms the basis of teachers' lesson planning. Guidance is supplemented through a published scheme.

Nevertheless, there is scope to provide further guidance for staff through identifying even clearer progression in mathematical topics throughout the school to ensure that all staff have a good understanding of the hierarchy of mathematical concepts.

- Although pupils have opportunities to apply their mathematics within problem-solving sessions in mathematics lessons, no clear audit has been conducted on how pupils apply mathematics across the curriculum.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is outstanding.

- Senior leaders provide excellent support for the coordinators of mathematics. Together with yourself, they undertake systematic cycles of lesson observations, feedback to teachers, professional development and follow-up on areas for improvement identified. Your evaluation of the lessons observed jointly was perceptive and accurate.
- Information on pupils' attainment and progress is regularly captured and analysed. Interventions to remedy identified gaps in pupils' knowledge take place regularly following a gap analysis of test results.
- The school's excellent capacity for improvement results from the honest and generally accurate assessment of areas of weakness as well as a willingness to take whatever steps are necessary to improve upon findings from monitoring activities. This is clearly demonstrated in the relatively recent actions to boost the challenge for the most able. It is also evident in the coordinators' grasp of what can be done to provide even better guidance to teachers through developing further the scheme of work.

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

- developing the scheme of work further so that it provides even clearer progression through mathematical topics throughout the school
- identifying clearly where pupils can apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to problem solving across the curriculum and finding manageable ways to assess this work.

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

**Sheila Nolan**  
**Additional Inspector**