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29 November 2011

Mrs J Hind
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hind

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 16 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 full lessons and a group-work session with six pupils.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- The very small numbers of pupils in each cohort make trends difficult to identify as performance tends to vary naturally from year to year. Nevertheless, in each of the last three years, every pupil made the expected progress by the end of Year 6 and at least half made good or outstanding progress. In 2011, nearly half attained the higher Level 5 in national Key Stage 2 tests. The picture is similar in Key Stage 1 with most pupils attaining the expected or higher levels, and all making the progress expected.
- Pupils' achievement in the lessons observed and in their current workbooks is also good, although more secure in the older year groups, particularly in basic number work, shape and the use of graphs and charts. The achievement of boys and girls does not differ significantly.

- An appropriate emphasis is placed on knowing multiplication facts and an understanding of place value. Although pupils recognise and know fractions as parts of shapes, they are less secure when working with numerical fractions.
- Older pupils can simplify basic algebraic expressions and use standard methods of calculation well to solve problems. They recognise simple decimals and can use calculators to complete two-digit division accurately. Younger pupils can count orally with confidence up to 100 although they make occasional errors when using the 'count on' method of addition.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers demonstrate several important skills while teaching mathematics. These include use of precise mathematical vocabulary at all times, high expectations and challenge – especially for the more able. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and enhance teaching of the subject with frequent, effective use of new technology. They foster enthusiasm for the subject which is reflected in the approach taken by pupils and their willingness to work independently. Many pupils say that mathematics is their favourite subject.
- A particular strength of the teaching is the use of accurate assessment of individual pupils' knowledge and skills which is then used to develop curriculum targets for all pupils. Pupils take their targets seriously. Occasionally, however, teachers do not follow up on potential misconceptions or use questioning that allows pupils to explain and develop their thinking at length and in greater detail.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The school has refreshed the curriculum thoughtfully in recent years. Much mathematical knowledge is now taught through themed work and topics. This supports learning in mathematics well. A good example is how the theme of 'Earth in Space' allowed pupils to explore huge numbers. Development of mathematical skills is supplemented by frequent practice and weekly homework. The school is well resourced for mathematics.
- A promising emphasis on real-life and practical activities allows pupils to apply their mathematical skills. However, at times, this can be limited by an emphasis on the more straightforward tasks rather than deeper exploration; for example, when pupils were asked to draw simple bar charts rather than interpret and represent more complex data.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- In recent years, the profile of mathematics has been raised across the school by a series of successful initiatives. These include greater challenge for more able pupils, closer involvement of parents and families, joint activities with other schools in the local cluster, and enhanced resources, including new technology.
- A key strength is teachers' attention to detail when monitoring the progress of individual pupils and when planning lessons. The subject leader has a good understanding of the school's priorities and pupils' levels of achievement although monitoring of the quality of mathematics lessons remains broad and generic rather than focused on mathematical content.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the use of questioning to assess and probe pupils' understanding, tackling any misconceptions, and increasing opportunities for pupils to explore and fully explain their mathematical thinking
- checking that all aspects of each mathematical topic are developed fully to ensure no gaps in pupils' fluency; in particular providing for current pupils more opportunities for addition and subtraction of fractions and shifting the emphasis from drawing graphs and charts to interpreting statistical data and diagrams.

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

Ceri Morgan
Her Majesty's Inspector