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Mr S Jones
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Jones

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 18 January 2012 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; observation of three lessons; and short visits to two other lessons and to a Year 2 catch-up session.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils enter the school with mathematical skills that are low. They make good progress so that by the time they leave Year 6 their attainment in mathematics is in line with the national average. They make most progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2 with slower progress in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils develop good skills in working independently and in small groups. They persevere in solving problems, for instance a Year 6 group worked tenaciously on a puzzle fitting triangles together so that sides with equivalent fractions matched. Their mathematical vocabulary is well developed and they are confident in explaining their methods.

- Pupils develop fluency across all areas of mathematics. They enjoy the subject and the opportunities they have to investigate within it and to apply it across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of fractions and their connection to decimals and percentages.
- Year 2 pupils whose attainment is low make very good progress with the programme 'Numbers Count'. The impact of this 12–18 week programme is evident long after they have completed it.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very strong. Teachers plan interesting lessons and explain concepts and methods well. They make good use of practical applications and these help pupils gain a fuller understanding. They have good techniques for encouraging persistence: these include helping pupils to see hard questions as a positive challenge and, when confronted by difficulty, helping pupils to focus on what they know about the problem rather than what they cannot at that stage do. Teachers interact with pupils well and on most occasions identify misconceptions. The marking of pupils' work is thorough.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers plan a rich suite of activities with a good balance of adult-led and pupil-initiated work. Pupils' mathematical vocabulary is developed outstandingly well and adults interact very well to further pupils' understanding.
- Sometimes teachers use learning objectives that are complicated with the result that pupils are unclear exactly what new mathematical content and skills they will be learning. Occasionally, the pace of the lesson is so quick that teachers fail to spot or make positive use of the misconceptions that pupils have.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Teachers plan their lessons to cover the full breadth of the primary mathematics curriculum. Pupils have rich opportunities to investigate and apply mathematics in lessons, including: solving word problems, constructing solids by creating nets of shapes, solving puzzles and collecting and analysing data. Pupils also apply their mathematical skills in other subject areas. Pupils use a range of information and communication technology applications to practise and explore within mathematics.
- Each classroom contains a good range of stimulating mathematics resources that have been carefully chosen to support learning. The consistency of these resources supports the development of approaches as pupils move through the school. However, the transition between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is less secure. Teachers in Key Stage 1 do not fully build on the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils have gained in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- Together, you and the subject leader provide effective strategic leadership of the subject. Your evaluation of the strengths and areas for development in mathematics is sharp, and plans for improvement are good. Previous years' plans have been successful in raising standards. Evaluation is based on rigorous analysis of data on pupils' performance, regular monitoring of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' books. Teachers are provided with insightful, yet brief, advice on what they currently most need to do to raise standards, and this is encapsulated in 'seven key messages'. The capacity for further improvement is good. Determined action has been taken to increase the progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 to the high level in the rest of the school, but more remains to be done.
- Very good use has been made of 'pupil premium' funding to provide Year 2 pupils with catch-up opportunities using the 'Numbers Count' programme. The evaluation of the impact of this scheme in the school for the school year 2010/11 is very thorough and convincingly demonstrates that lower attaining pupils have benefited significantly.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 so that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are effectively developed
- increasing the consistency of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - use learning objectives that are concise and clear to pupils
 - exploit all opportunities to spot misconceptions and use them to promote understanding.

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

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector