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9 March 2012

Mr K Kendall
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kendall

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 29 February 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 two lessons, both undertaken jointly with senior staff from the school; and brief visits to other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with mathematical knowledge and skills lower than are typical for their age. They make good progress so that on entry to Year 1 they have reached broadly average standards.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, although fewer pupils have reached the higher levels in each of the last two years. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is typically average or above average in mathematics, representing good progress overall. Although standards fell back in 2011, affected by the impact of very high levels of mobility affecting that cohort, inspection evidence supports the school's assessment data that current pupils are now on track to exceed national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils' good progress across the school is reflected in the quality of work in their books and in their learning in lessons. Interventions ensure that a strong focus is placed on the rates of progress made by all pupils. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to these, as seen, for example, in 'the counting house' and in 'conference marking' sessions.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics lessons and are keen to do well. They rise readily to the challenge of exploring mathematical ideas and concepts. Their books show they experience a range of practical activities, puzzles, problems and short investigations. When tackling problems involving charts and graphs, they are able to interpret and explain what they have found out.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teaching is highly inclusive of all pupils; well-established routines and very positive classroom relationships contribute significantly to the quality of pupils' learning. Vibrant displays and celebrations of pupils' work provide a stimulating environment, particularly in the Reception class.
- A common approach to the use of learning intentions and success criteria, clearly understood by pupils, helps to support pupils' learning well. The quality of resources and use of information and communication technology by teachers adds significantly to pupils' engagement and interest. In the most effective lessons, teachers' questioning ensures that all pupils are actively involved and challenged to reason and explain their answers, sometimes through the use of 'talk partners'. Where teaching is less effective, the teacher does too much thinking for the pupils or activities do not challenge pupils to apply their skills in a sufficiently wide range of examples and contexts.
- Teachers' planning is detailed and identifies clearly how learning will be developed. The best planning anticipates pupils' misconceptions and plans to address them. It shows how tasks and activities are to be adapted for different groups of pupils and identifies specific questions to check understanding and develop pupils' reasoning skills. However, pupils' books show that higher-attaining pupils occasionally complete the same work as other pupils, particularly when developing procedural fluency.
- Marking is detailed and helps pupils to improve. For example, 'conference marking' identifies and addresses gaps in pupils' knowledge following teaching. It enables very prompt action to be taken where pupils' progress begins to falter.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The curriculum is based around Primary National Strategy materials and a wealth of guidance and resource material support teachers well in their medium- and short-term planning, including in ensuring progression in the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.

- While mathematics is taught mainly as a discrete subject, display work and pupils' books show that pupils are able to apply their skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- A three-part-lesson structure is used well to keep pupils' mental skills sharp. The analysis of assessment information is effective at ensuring a focus on gaps in pupils' understanding of certain topics. However, this analysis does not also consider how approaches to teaching these topics might be strengthened.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- You are providing a very strong lead for the further development of mathematics and have led a rigorous, evidence-based evaluation of all aspects of provision. As a result, you have driven improvements through a focus on individual or whole-school support for staff. The impact of this work can be seen in improved rates of progress and the quality of pupils' learning in lessons.
- You have led the staff in reviewing progression in fractions. However, the benefits of this approach have not yet been extended to explore other strands of mathematics and the choice of these strands is not informed by your analysis of existing assessment information.
- Leaders' evaluations of the lessons observed jointly were broadly accurate and identified key mathematical features of the teaching. However, records of monitoring tend to focus on attributes of teaching rather than focusing strongly on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- extending the approaches to developing teachers' understanding of progression in different strands of mathematics from Reception to Year 6, focusing initially on those aspects identified by an analysis of assessment information
- ensuring that teaching consistently deepens pupils' understanding by providing more opportunities for them to reason and explain their answers.

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

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector