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Mr C Cole
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cole

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 1 March 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; and observation of parts of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is outstanding.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding.

- From starting points that are below age-related expectations when they join the school, children make outstanding progress. Their attainment has risen quickly in recent years, so that it is close to average by the end of Reception, average by the end of Key Stage 1, and above average by the end of Key Stage 2. The school's records and pupils' work show that progress in each year group is at least good, and that attainment is continuing to rise.
- The school's effective monitoring of pupils' progress has enabled groups of girls and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to improve their progress this year to match that of other pupils, so that above average proportions of pupils are on track to make more than the expected two levels of progress between Key Stages 1 and 2.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to find fractions of numbers and apply this accurately when solving problems in context, although they are not as fluent at recognising equivalences between fractions and division.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is outstanding.

- Teachers communicate enthusiasm that excites pupils about learning mathematics. Pupils really enjoy it and involve themselves wholeheartedly in practical activities and solving challenging problems, many of which are set in real-life contexts. Pupils work hard throughout lessons and learn quickly.
- Teachers give clear explanations and emphasise the importance of correct vocabulary and layout, which pupils use well. Teachers convey high expectations, including through setting out different skills and knowledge for each group to learn, although they miss some opportunities to link these to understanding and to check how all are progressing. Many pupils evaluate their progress well against these expectations and identify perceptively the next steps they need to take. Relentless monitoring, coupled with very well-targeted teaching and support, enables pupils to make excellent progress.
- Pupils think hard during much of their work and build good links between practical approaches and formal methods, but sometimes during whole-class activity a few are not challenged. Pupils show initiative in choosing methods for solving problems but are not always encouraged to develop independence through thinking in advance what their answer might be or how they could manage without practical equipment.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is outstanding.

- The curriculum meets pupils' needs extremely well, and is adapted in the light of evaluation. A wide range of customised intervention is provided through support in class, additional sets, work in small groups, one-to-one tuition and through key workers who support pupils working below their targets.
- Progression is ensured and duplication avoided through the subject leader's weekly check of planning that leads to immediate support in improving plans where needed. Nevertheless, occasionally pupils spend less time on a topic than they need to grasp it. Teachers are given specific guidance on progression across all year groups through the calculation progression policy and training in each area of mathematics. Problem solving, approaches that develop conceptual understanding, and use of information and communication technology are embedded in teaching and learning throughout the school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is outstanding.

- Through thorough planning and evaluation, leaders have set challenging targets and successfully driven up pupils' attainment and progress. They monitor progress and provision assiduously and provide support through coaching and demonstration lessons that effectively improves teaching quality. The subject leader inspires teachers and gives them additional skills and confidence to excite pupils about learning mathematics and enable them to make excellent progress.
- Judgements of teaching made during joint observations with the inspector were accurate, and the most important areas for improvement were identified. Records of previous lesson observations pinpoint strengths and weaknesses astutely but do not consistently contain detailed evaluation of the progress of groups of pupils, the development of understanding, or the monitoring of pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising teaching quality to more consistently outstanding by increasing the focus on developing and checking pupils' understanding, thinking and independence, and through evaluating these aspects of lessons more rigorously.

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

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector