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Mr R Phillips  
Headteacher  
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Coton Road  
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Dear Mr Phillips

### **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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

#### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils join the school in Year 3 having attained above-average results in their end of Key Stage 1 assessments. The school's baseline testing early in Year 3 shows that they fall back a little on transfer. They then make good progress to reach high standards by the end of Key Stage 2. National test results in 2011 were particularly good for boys, with nearly two thirds achieving Level 5 in mathematics.
- By Year 6, pupils show a very good level of understanding and speak confidently about their work. Pupils of differing levels of attainment enjoy mathematics. They are willing to try new problems and to talk about their solutions and the methods they use. Pupils enjoy the investigative activities that have been introduced this year. The most able are enthused by mathematics because lessons regularly challenge them.

- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs make good progress in mathematics because the teaching they receive in small classes is carefully matched to their needs.

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

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers organise their classrooms efficiently, develop very positive relationships with pupils, and manage the work of teaching assistants well. They use a variety of methods to include all pupils in class discussion, such as paired talk, directing questions to selected individuals, and adapting their questioning to reflect a pupil's previous reply.
- Lessons typically involve a developmental stage where pupils discuss ideas and refine their thinking through a practical or exploratory activity. For example, Year 6 pupils who were learning about converting fractions to decimals spent some time thinking about estimates before being shown a standard method. This helped them to make more sense of the different representations of number.
- In the lessons seen, teaching ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The strongest teachers are very skilled at using probing, follow-up questions to check and extend pupils' understanding. Lessons were less effective where teachers' explanations went on too long before pupils were allowed to work independently. In these lessons, teachers had fewer opportunities to check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions.
- Teachers maintain detailed records of pupils' progress in different strands of mathematics and this information is used very well to tailor intervention to meet individual needs. The quality of marking is outstanding in the Year 6 classes that are taught by the subject leaders. Teachers' comments always require a response from pupils which they follow up next time.

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

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Curriculum planning is based on an enhanced version of a commercial scheme of work. The weekly plans provide some guidance on teaching approaches. Teachers adapt the plans for the range of needs in their classes, sometimes using different activities to those suggested. An agreed policy ensures consistency in written calculations, but the teaching of other topics does not consistently use the most effective approaches.
- Pupils expect mathematics to make sense because they spend time on developmental work that helps build a conceptual framework. The quantity of independent work covered by pupils in each lesson is good, and incorporates progressively more demanding questions.
- The whole-school focus on 'building learning power' influences learning in mathematics in particular by encouraging resilience and perseverance. Since September 2011, the curriculum has been enriched by a series of investigative tasks, real-life problems and practical activities. As yet, the

school has not structured this additional material to optimise progression in using and applying mathematics.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is outstanding.

- Senior leaders have a very good understanding of the distinctive nature of mathematics. They are enthusiastic about mathematics and keen that pupils will enjoy the subject. The school has maintained high levels of attainment for several years with an improving trend in progress.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving. The subject leaders have a high level of mathematics expertise. They provide a very strong role model through their own teaching and are developing effective strategies to share good practice.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive. Monitoring is based on learning walks, work scrutiny and pupil interviews. The findings are collated in a written report and shared with staff and governors. Each report leads to an action plan to tackle identified weaknesses. For example, the last review identified a need for better 'developmental marking'. The subject leaders put together a file illustrating good practice and disseminated this with staff and good practice is now spreading across the school.
- The school provides very good professional development in mathematics which includes external support and 'lesson study' by teachers who work in pairs to plan, deliver and observe a lesson in detail.

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

- accelerating pupils' progress by ensuring that lessons include more independent work to give teachers time to check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions as they work
- ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better by agreeing how topics other than calculation should be approached and adapting the schemes of work accordingly
- reviewing the recently introduced schedule of investigative tasks, real-life problems and practical activities to ensure progression in using and applying mathematics.

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

**Stephen Abbott**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**