

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



20 March 2012

Mrs F McPhee
Acting Headteacher
Newnham Croft Primary School
Chedworth Street
Cambridge
CB3 9JF

Dear Mrs McPhee

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 6 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; observations conducted jointly with you and the acting deputy headteacher of three lessons and brief visits to four other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children join the school with mathematical knowledge and skills that are in line with, or slightly above, expectations for their age. Attainment is significantly above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6.
- Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, slows in Key Stage 2, but is satisfactory overall. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress from their starting points.
- Though pupils solve some problems, opportunities to approach and record investigations independently are limited. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that their knowledge and understanding of fractions are not developed in sufficient depth, and focus chiefly on the manipulation of fractions.

- Pupils show positive attitudes and apply themselves to tasks readily. Their behaviour is consistently good and makes a significant contribution to learning in lessons. Year 6 pupils demonstrate high levels of concentration and enthusiasm and confidently explain their calculation methods.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- In most lessons observed, good relationships support learning. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils. Strengths of the better teaching include good use of questioning and quality resources that help pupils to clarify and consolidate their ideas.
- Lesson planning is thorough. All plans set out precise lesson objectives, highlight probing questions and clearly identify the role of support staff. Planning indicates how tasks are adapted for different groups of pupils and extension activities focus on problem solving and generalisations. However, higher-attaining pupils in particular often needlessly participate in the main teaching phase of the lesson. As a consequence, they do not have sufficient time to complete the more challenging work set for them.
- Scrutiny of Key Stage 2 pupils' books also indicates that work is insufficiently adapted to meet the needs of different ability groups. Activities are frequently repetitive, involving the completion of worksheets. Therefore, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their own ways of recording. While marking of pupils' work indicates progress towards the learning objective it does not inform pupils what they have done well and how they might extend their thinking.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The Primary National Strategy Framework provides the basis for teachers' planning. You have rightly identified that not enough account is taken of what pupils already know when planning units of work so that it more closely matches their needs and abilities.
- The school is in the process of revising its provision for supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and assessing the effectiveness of different intervention programmes. A strength of the provision for pupils in lessons is the use of practical resources that interest and engage pupils and support learning, for example, fraction walls.
- Recent initiatives to develop links between mathematics and other subjects are in their early stages but already showing positive outcomes for pupils. For example, Year 2 pupils apply their knowledge and understanding of measures to making a 'trebuchet' for their 'Castles' topic theme. They design tapestries by halving squares in different ways and can explain what they are doing using precise mathematical vocabulary.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The school has experienced a period of unsettled leadership in recent years. You and the deputy headteacher are in temporary roles. In addition, you are both leading developments in mathematics in the absence of the subject leader. You have identified that progress in mathematics is not as good as it could be and have made mathematics a key strand for improvement in the school development plan. However, the success criteria are not sharply defined to aid evaluation of impact.
- The evaluations of the lessons jointly observed by you and by the deputy headteacher were accurate and you rightly identified the strengths and improvement areas. A monitoring and evaluation programme has been extended to include informal 'drop-ins' and discussions with pupils and staff to give a wider picture of the quality of teaching.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have recently reviewed the school's calculation policy. This is ensuring a more consistent approach to teaching calculation methods throughout the school.
- Assessment information is being used more rigorously to identify those pupils who are in danger of falling behind their targets. Pupil-progress meetings with staff are now held more regularly to identify pupils who would benefit from additional support programmes. Much of the work is at an early stage with some way to go before the impact of actions are fully realised in terms of accelerated progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- accelerating rates of progress in Key Stage 2 by ensuring:
 - that teachers take account of what pupils already know and can do in planning work which is closely matched to their abilities
 - greater levels of challenge for all pupils in lessons, particularly those who are higher attaining
 - that teachers' marking of pupils' work enables pupils to know what they have done well and how they might extend their thinking
 - that pupils explore investigations more independently.
- ensuring that success criteria are more precise to aid the evaluation of the impact of improvement strategies on pupils' progress.

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

Sarah Warboys
Additional Inspector