

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs P Qureshi  
Headteacher  
How Wood Primary and Nursery School  
Spooners Drive  
Park Street  
St Albans  
AL2 2HU

Dear Mrs Qureshi

### **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 13 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 seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

#### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- The school's records and pupils' work indicate that pupils are making good progress across year groups. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress from starting points at age-related expectations and go on to reach above average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. Progress in Key Stage 2 has risen, so that Year 6 pupils are on track for above average attainment having started the key stage with average attainment. However, some previous lower achievement for Year 4 pupils has not been fully overcome.
- Gaps in achievement between groups of pupils are closing. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are making similar progress to their peers, although their attainment is lower.

- In lessons, pupils work conscientiously and learn well. They are prepared to think hard when given challenging problems, but do not do this routinely at other times to increase their understanding of the methods they are using. Sometimes, the highest attainers do not make as much progress as they could because they spend too long listening to the teacher's explanations to the whole class.

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

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers build a productive and stimulating working atmosphere in lessons through their good knowledge of the pupils and well-targeted activities and questioning that generally meet their needs, aided well by the support staff. They develop effectively pupils' ability to discuss and explain mathematics and use vocabulary correctly, as well as their confidence to learn through making mistakes.
- Pupils have many opportunities to solve problems, even though topics are not introduced regularly in this way. Practical equipment is used well to support learning, although visual images do not always link this experience to the methods used, for example when finding equivalent fractions. Pupils sometimes rely more on remembering rules and checking steps on wall displays than on understanding the method and finding their own way to overcome difficulties.
- Assessment during lessons uses mini-whiteboards effectively to identify errors, but teachers miss some opportunities for moving between pupils during whole-class and individual work to identify their difficulties and move them on more quickly. Pupils make helpful self-assessments against objectives for what they will learn to do in each lesson, which teachers respond to, but they do not systematically build up a bigger picture of how well they understand the whole concept.

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

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Planning based on the Primary National Strategy framework ensures appropriate coverage and differential challenge, particularly in the activities provided for individual work. Nevertheless, progression through a topic from year to year is not always thorough. Starter activities and whole-class work are sometimes matched well to pupils' different abilities but are not consistently demanding for higher attainers.
- Teachers use real-life contexts, cross-curricular links and investigatory work, although the reasoning skills required for using and applying mathematics are not developed systematically.
- Support and extension are tailored well for those who are falling behind or are gifted in mathematics.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- Concerted steps to sharpen the focus on monitoring pupils' progress and to hold staff to account for it have led to higher expectations and improved teaching and outcomes. Data for individuals and whole cohorts are now used well to set targets and to inform planning and intervention, although monitoring of how well groups of pupils are making the expected two levels of progress across Key Stage 2 is not as well developed.
- Self-evaluation and monitoring of teaching are accurate, and have fed into professional development and action planning that have led to improvements, although clear measurable impact is not always specified when actions are planned. Observation of teaching carried out jointly with me was accurate and perceptive in identifying areas for development.

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

- driving up attainment and progress further, particularly for those pupils with higher prior-attainment, through:
  - focusing teaching and the curriculum more on challenging higher attainers and on developing understanding, progression in concepts, thinking, reasoning and problem solving
  - monitoring more systematically the progress of individuals and groups during lessons and throughout key stages
  - increasing pupils' responsibility for assessing whether they understand and can explain what they are learning.

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**