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Mrs M Wilson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Wilson

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 20 January 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 three lessons; and short visits to four other lessons and to a Year 2 catch-up session.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils enter the school with mathematical skills that are broadly average. In recent years, pupils made no more than the expected progress, mainly because expectations of more able pupils were not sufficiently high. Currently, these pupils are making good progress and, throughout the school, progress is now good. Pupils have good numeracy skills as a result of regular and effective practice of their mental methods. They enjoy the subject and have good appreciation of the usefulness of the subject. However, some do not see the depth of fascination with mathematics that they experience in other subjects.
- All pupils know their targets in terms of the National Curriculum level they are aiming for, and they also all know the key area in which they need to

improve. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a good understanding of fractions. They also apply mathematics well in solving problems, such as calculating a speed when given information on a distance travelled in five minutes.

- Pupils of low ability in Years 2 and 3 are making good progress with the 'Every Child Counts' catch-up programme.

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

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers take consistent approaches to fostering pupils' mathematical development. They place great value on counting as a key to mental methods. This moves from simple counting with younger pupils to more advanced methods such as counting in fractions with older pupils. Teachers plan a second learning objective for each lesson to ensure depth of learning as well as mastery of technique. They carefully break down methods in a systematic way referred to as 'steps for success'. This enables pupils to see methods very clearly and also enables both the teacher and the pupils to spot precisely where a difficulty or misconception has arisen. Teachers encourage pupils to produce their own 'steps', and this also enables teachers to gauge the extent of mastery of the topic.
- The quality of marking of pupils' work is good, and is consistent across teachers. Teachers comment on how pupils can improve their work, and some comments are perceptive, such as the teacher who commented that a pupil could find equivalent fractions where the numerator and denominator have a common factor of 2, and now needed to be aware of other common factors.
- Teachers maintain a good pace to lessons and are careful that their lesson introductions are not too long. Sometimes, however, this pace precludes the use of open questions to probe pupils' understanding. Teachers develop pupils' mathematical vocabulary, but do not encourage pupils enough to use these words actively in their responses to questions.

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

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Teachers use National Primary Strategy planning to ensure breadth and balance to the curriculum. Applications of mathematics are emphasised, and teachers give pupils a structured approach to word problems. They motivate topics with real-life examples of mathematics, often using short video-clips. Mathematics is applied well across the curriculum, especially in design and technology and science. A mathematics activity week each summer term gives extra opportunities for applying mathematics, with themes such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games. Year 6 pupils have opportunities to solve problems actively during their annual residential trip to Plas Dol-y-Moch.
- Pupils have opportunities to investigate within mathematics, such as exploring the properties of consecutive numbers and number powers.

However, this is less well developed than the practical application of mathematics and explains why pupils have a wider appreciation of the usefulness of mathematics than of its intrinsic fascination.

- The needs of the most able are met well through, for instance, entry to the Primary Mathematics Challenge and additional extension material in lessons. Close links have been established with partner secondary schools, and more able Year 6 pupils are following some Year 7 topics.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- You, and the three subject leaders, have improved the effectiveness of mathematics teaching since the school was inspected in January 2010. The variability in teaching and assessment has been replaced by consistency of practice from teacher to teacher. The use of data previously varied, whereas now data are used at a whole-school level to ensure progress and also to ensure that every pupil knows what to do to improve. Pupils' work and the quality of teaching are regularly monitored. School improvement planning has been effective in securing change. The capacity for further improvement is good.
- A calculation policy is providing for the consistent development of pupils' facility with calculation as they move through the school. Parents have been closely informed of this with special sessions to communicate the methods used and explain to parents how they can support their children.
- Good opportunities have been taken for teachers and teaching assistants to develop their skills through in-school training and local authority courses.

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

- developing teachers' use of open questions to deepen pupils' understanding
- increasing pupils' use of mathematical vocabulary
- placing more emphasis on investigating within mathematics and so increasing pupils' appreciation of the intrinsic fascination of the subject.

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

**Robert Barbour**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**