

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



12 April 2012

Mrs S Davies
Headteacher
Long Meadow School
Garthwaite Crescent
Shenley Brook End
Milton Keynes
MK5 7XX

Dear Mrs Davies

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 15 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The progress that pupils make during Key Stage 2 has been broadly average in recent years. The school's data and pupils' work indicate that Year 6 pupils are also on track to make satisfactory progress. Girls make less progress across Key Stage 2 than boys, particularly those with higher prior attainment, and reach lower standards of attainment. Pupils with a first language other than English make less progress than their peers. Progress across year groups is not consistent, and is slowest in Year 3.
- Children join Reception at age-related expectations and make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. In the last four years, the standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, a quarter of whom joined the school later than the normal time, were slightly above national figures. Following a dip in Key Stage 1 attainment in 2011, the school's concerted efforts have improved pupils'

progress, and records indicate that Year 2 pupils are on track for broadly average attainment.

- In lessons, pupils are keen to learn. They work hard and make satisfactory progress. The rate of learning differs across groups of pupils, with the higher attainers sometimes not being challenged enough.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers use their good professional relationships with pupils to set high expectations of behaviour and effort. They illustrate their explanations soundly using equipment and on the interactive whiteboard, although they do not routinely encourage pupils to visualise how these link to the methods they learn. Pupils carry out these methods satisfactorily but do not develop a robust understanding of why they work.
- Teachers use pair discussion and random selection for questioning to engage both girls and boys and to develop mathematical thinking, but do not always ensure that the activities are sufficiently challenging or that everyone participates. They sometimes ask pupils to gauge what an answer might be before working it out, but do not routinely ask pupils to estimate in advance or look for connections.
- Teachers use detailed lesson plans, with the best tailored closely to individual needs, but staff do not always check quickly how well pupils are getting on so some spend too long being muddled or making mistakes. Pupils make helpful self-assessments against objectives for what they will learn to do in each lesson, which teachers check, but opportunities are missed to synthesise and support areas where pupils have misconceptions.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Use of the Primary National Strategy framework ensures appropriate coverage and breadth of activities, but some gaps in progression arise where pupils have not built firm foundations rooted in understanding during previous years. Staff have limited guidance to support the use of approaches that develop conceptual understanding.
- Lessons draw on a range of resources. The resources enliven learning and make it more interactive. Pupils have opportunities to work on open-ended problems and use mathematics in different contexts and subjects, but the reasoning required for problem solving is not built up systematically.
- Customised support helps raise the progress of individuals who are falling behind, but areas of weakness have not been analysed to improve the future curriculum for groups that are making the least progress, for example by challenging high attainers from the beginning of each lesson.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Leaders are committed to improving outcomes and have taken action that has raised pupils' progress, having correctly identified previous weaknesses in Key Stage 1 attainment. In-service training and sharper monitoring of each pupil's progress have increased the focus on closing gaps in performance and raising the attainment of pupils who have special educational needs or are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school's evaluation of achievement is generous because the progress of individuals and groups from their different starting points at the beginning of each key stage is not analysed well enough. Action plans have recognised the need to raise girls' achievement but have not set priorities to improve progress, with measurable outcomes expressed in terms of impact or with clarity of accountability. Evaluation of teaching is generous because too little emphasis has been placed on the rate of progress made by all pupils during lessons. However, leaders pinpointed accurately strengths and areas for development in the joint observations of lessons with me during the inspection.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- driving up attainment and progress overall and of groups of pupils, informed by monitoring the progress of individuals and groups from their different starting points across whole key stages and against clear targets
- focusing teaching more on developing understanding, thinking and reasoning, ensuring that everyone is challenged to make good progress, and checking all pupils' learning throughout the lesson
- providing better progression in the curriculum, with more emphasis on understanding concepts and the systematic development of problem-solving skills.

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