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6 December 2010

Mrs D Connell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Connell

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 November 2010 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 two lessons and three part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children enter school with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Reception, children's attainment in number and shape is broadly average, but their calculation skills are below average.
- Pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory in Key Stage 1. Attainment is slightly below average by the end of Year 2.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' learning and progress are good. Attainment is slightly above average, by the end of Year 6, and rising.
- Over recent years, the progress of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been stronger than the progress made by more able pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1.

- Pupils' conceptual understanding keeps pace with their developing knowledge and skills, although some pupils still find it difficult in using and applying their skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, concentrate and apply themselves diligently and enjoy learning, particularly when using computers.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Vibrant classroom displays help pupils to acquire mathematical vocabulary, remember number facts and rules, and work independently.
- Clearly explained learning objectives, revisited towards the end of a lesson, ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and the extent to which they have succeeded.
- The activities provided for pupils with average and lower attainment are matched well to their learning needs. A good level of challenge is provided for more able pupils in many lessons, although there are occasions when the challenge is not sufficient to move their learning forward sufficiently.
- Teachers' skilful use of interactive whiteboards and practical apparatus make an important contribution to pupils' conceptual understanding.
- In the very best lessons, teachers assess pupils' understanding continually, for example by asking them to hold up and show their answers and explain their reasoning. However, this practice is not consistent.
- The marking of pupils' work is accurate, helpful and identifies and remedies misconceptions. Pupils are given general targets to aim for but information is not always provided to help them understand what they need to do to reach the next level.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- A rich and varied Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum enables children to make good progress and transfer smoothly into Year 1.
- Teachers benefit from clear guidance on how to develop pupils' calculation skills, quick recall of number facts and mathematical vocabulary.
- Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum, such as art and science. However, problem-solving opportunities in lessons, although good in Year 6, are not built up systematically in every year group.
- The mathematics curriculum and pupils' enjoyment of learning are enhanced significantly throughout the school by the use of personalised computer programmes.
- Increasingly effective assessment of pupils' progress is providing teachers with valuable information on strengths and weaknesses in pupils'

understanding. This is helping teachers to adapt the curriculum and provide additional catch-up sessions to secure good achievement.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of mathematics is good.

- Your contribution in recruiting and developing staff and providing clear direction and purpose, is reflected in the good teaching across the school and in pupils' improving progress.
- The recently appointed subject leader provides a particularly good example of how to teach mathematics effectively and is taking increasing responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the development of the subject across the school.
- Good analysis of assessment data, tracking pupils' progress rigorously and setting challenging targets are instrumental in improving attainment.
- Pupils are encouraged to assess their learning, which contributes towards their progress. However, their views regarding mathematics are not systematically gathered and considered as a basis for future planning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that more able pupils are challenged sufficiently in all lessons
- developing the using and applying aspects of the curriculum to ensure that pupils become adept in investigating and problem-solving
- ensuring that teachers use assessment consistently within the lesson to identify pupils' understanding and pinpoint and remedy misconceptions
- taking greater account of pupils' views when planning the curriculum.

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

Colin Smith
Additional Inspector