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Ms D Reeves
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Reeves

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 May 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 four lessons, one undertaken jointly with you; and brief visits to three further lessons, including an after-school session for Year 5 pupils.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with mathematical knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. Although they make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, rates of progress are satisfactory through Key Stage 1 so that standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average. However, progress accelerates through Key Stage 2 so that, by the end of Year 6, pupils are reaching standards in mathematics that are higher than those typical for their age.
- Pupils' good progress overall is reflected in the quality of work in their books and their learning in lessons, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The rigorous use of assessment data ensures that a strong focus is placed on the rates of progress made by all pupils. All groups of pupils make good

progress, including higher-attaining pupils, with little difference in the levels of boys' and girls' attainment by the end of Year 6.

- Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and often show very good attitudes to learning. They listen well and are eager to answer questions. Year 2 pupils, responding to a letter from the manager of a garden centre, enjoyed working together to sort pictures of mini-beasts according to criteria they had devised for their Carroll diagrams.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- All the teaching observed was good. A consistent feature was effective planning that ensured that tasks and activities were appropriately matched to different ability groupings within the class. Teachers have high expectations and, in the best lessons, adjust learning well to take account of feedback from pupils.
- Where teaching was most effective, teachers ensured that dialogue and discussion underpinned pupils' experience of mathematics. The use of 'talk partners' ensured that all pupils were involved in answering questions. A brisk pace, coupled with appropriately challenging work, meant that pupils were able to make good progress.
- Not all teaching develops pupils' independence in learning well, so that some pupils are too reliant on the teacher or other adults for support and direction. Teachers' questioning is not consistently effective in deepening pupils' understanding of mathematics by challenging them more frequently to reason and justify their answers.
- Marking is regular and teachers provide praise and encouragement for pupils to improve their work. Although marking often identifies targets for improvement, it rarely requires pupils to respond effectively to the advice provided. For example, in one instance, a pupil's incorrect response to marked work went unchecked.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The school uses the Primary National Strategy materials for planning a broad and balanced, well-organised mathematics curriculum. Useful guidance is available for teachers to ensure that pupils' skills are developed progressively as they move through the school. Following an analysis of pupils' responses to written test papers, the school revised its policy for the teaching of calculation skills. As a result, approaches across the school are much more consistent and pupils have greater confidence in applying the methods they have learnt.
- Mathematics is threaded successfully throughout the curriculum, and pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to develop their skills in other contexts. However, although the school has recently focused on

developing pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics, the impact of this work remains inconsistent across the school.

- While teachers use a wide range of resources and materials well to support pupils' learning in mathematics, information and communication technology is underused as a resource to further develop pupils' independent learning skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- You have provided a strong focus and drive for improvement, supported by the subject leader for mathematics. You have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses and good plans to bring about further improvement. The monitoring of pupils' progress is regular and ensures that any underachievement is quickly identified and support provided. The analysis of assessment information informs adaptations to the curriculum to strengthen the approaches to teaching these topics in future years.
- The school has a focused programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. You have placed an emphasis on ensuring quality and consistency of approaches to teaching mathematics and this has played a significant role in raising standards across the school. The judicious use of external providers to support teachers' professional development is ensuring that the needs of the school are appropriately met. The programme of lesson observation provides a basis for the evaluation of provision and identifies aspects where teaching can be further strengthened. However, the records of the evaluation of teaching focus more on the attributes of teaching than on their impact on pupils' learning. In addition, the areas for development arising from lesson observations do not lead to a sharp focus in future monitoring activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils respond effectively to written feedback and that teachers follow up pupils' responses.
- developing pupils' independence and problem-solving skills, including through questioning that is consistently effective in deepening pupils' understanding and in challenging them to reason and justify their answers.

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

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector