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Ms S Dawson
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Dawson

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 16 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 three lessons, one undertaken jointly with you; and brief visits to four further lessons and a lunchtime 'mathletics' session for Year 5 pupils.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with mathematical knowledge and skills that vary from broadly typical to below what is typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that standards by the end of Year 2 are close to average.
- In recent years, pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has been too slow and standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6 have been low. In 2011, girls and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals made inadequate progress in mathematics.
- Inspection evidence confirms that achievement is rising and is now satisfactory overall. As a result of improvements in the accuracy of

assessment information, the school is providing effective support for those pupils at risk of underachievement. In addition, pupils say how much they enjoy and benefit from a regular focus on mental mathematics and written methods – known as ‘the simmering pot’ and ‘method Mondays’. The school can also demonstrate the impact of its work to secure improvements in pupils’ recall of multiplication facts.

- Pupils enjoy mathematics and speak proudly of the awards they receive as part of the ‘maths league of champions’, demonstrating their growing confidence with number facts. They listen well in lessons, and are keen to produce their best work. Year 2 pupils enjoyed explaining the ways in which they were making sequences from shapes of different colours.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching varies. The best teaching provides a clear sense of purpose with activities that underpin the intended learning well. For example, in a lesson in the Reception class, the teacher explained clearly to the children what they were going to learn and how. The task enabled children of different abilities to demonstrate and extend their understanding well. A recent focus on practical approaches to mathematics ensures that pupils of all ages are guided to develop more abstract thinking once underlying ideas are secure. Teaching assistants are generally well deployed in the main part of lessons.
- Where teaching is less effective, pupils listen to their teachers for too long and opportunities for them to develop reasoning skills through paired and small group work are missed. On occasion, pupils are not involved in tasks and activities quickly enough. A scrutiny of pupils’ work shows that they do not always get enough practice to secure depth of learning and fluency in skills. While some teachers’ questioning skilfully checks pupils’ understanding, not all staff monitor pupils’ progress sufficiently closely when they are working independently or in groups. In a few cases, weaknesses in teachers’ subject knowledge results in pupils’ incorrect use of symbols and notation, for example, when expressing the n th term of number sequences.
- Marking and feedback are timely and helpful. In the best examples, this sets up a dialogue between pupils, teachers and teaching assistants which provides a valuable insight into gaps in pupils’ learning. At other times, the marking of some work does not pick up on errors in pupils’ calculations or conceptual understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The school uses the Primary National Strategy materials, supplemented by a commercial scheme, to provide a broad and balanced mathematics curriculum. A focus on mathematics throughout the curriculum ensures that pupils are able to develop their skills in a range of contexts. However,

a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books shows inconsistencies in the development of pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Self-evaluation in mathematics is accurate and suitable plans are in place to address those areas in need of improvement. Your evaluation of the jointly observed lesson was well considered and clearly identified points for further development.
- The school has a regular programme for monitoring the quality of teaching, with a focus on securing the implementation of a range of recent initiatives. However, the evidence collected from different monitoring activities is not linked together sufficiently to enable a more complete view of provision, or to lead to a sharp enough focus for future monitoring activities. In addition, existing approaches to monitoring could be strengthened by paying greater attention to mathematical detail; in particular, pupils' depth of understanding and their fluency in the application of skills.
- The accuracy and quality of assessment information have been sharpened recently and detailed records are kept of the gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding. However, not all staff draw upon a sufficiently secure range of evidence in making judgements about pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening teaching, ensuring that it provides pupils with more opportunities to develop their reasoning skills, to encounter topics in sufficient depth and secure fluency in the application of skills
- ensuring that the monitoring of teaching focuses more sharply on mathematical detail and draws on a sufficiently wide range of evidence in evaluating provision
- providing further support for staff in assessing accurately pupils' attainment and progress.

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