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Mr C Saywell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Saywell

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 23 and 24 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of seven lessons, including two undertaken jointly with staff from the school, and three shorter visits to lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Students enter Baysgarth with broadly average levels of attainment in mathematics. The proportion of students who reach grades A* to C in mathematics GCSE has been below average in each of the last three years, as has the proportion gaining the highest A* and A grades. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall.
- Progress is currently satisfactory overall. However, in recent years, too many students did not make the expected progress in mathematics from their Key Stage 2 starting points. Rates of progress declined further in 2011: boys' progress in particular was inadequate. Inspection evidence, including the outcomes from early entry examinations, indicates that the

school's concerted efforts to raise attainment, particularly in Key Stage 4, are having a positive impact.

- Students' work shows most are making satisfactory progress in lessons. However, the progress of many students, particularly boys, is still hampered by poor presentation of written work and a slow work rate. Older students appreciate the support given by their teachers and benefit from generally positive working relationships. When given challenging tasks and opportunities to work collaboratively, students respond well but many lack confidence when tackling unfamiliar or unstructured problems.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- While teaching is satisfactory overall, some good aspects to the teaching were observed. In the best lessons, teachers provided opportunities for students to deepen their understanding through a combination of probing questions and paired or small-group work. A variety of different tasks and activities is helping students to develop their grasp of mathematical concepts in ways which capture and sustain their interest. Support for those students with lower levels of literacy helps them to access challenging tasks effectively.
- Where teaching is less effective, the teacher talks for too long or does too much thinking for the students. Expectations are not high enough and more-able students are not challenged effectively to reach higher standards. Some teaching does not review learning well, or help students to demonstrate clearly what they have learnt. Too often, students are given rules that they do not fully understand or are introduced too quickly to formal approaches to solving problems. In addition, a scrutiny of work shows that students are not systematically given problems to solve or realistic contexts for learning.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The faculty's schemes of work are adequate but have weaknesses which are hindering more rapid improvement in teaching. In particular, as the school recognises, they provide little guidance on how key topics should be taught, on materials and resources to support learning, or on what depth of coverage is expected.
- Supported by external partners, the faculty is embracing the use of more creative approaches to teaching mathematics, including through the use of information and communication technology. Students enjoyed the activities and approaches arising from a data-handling unit that had been jointly planned by all the teachers in the faculty. This work is at too early a stage of development to impact more significantly on the overall coherence of the curriculum.
- The move to a two-year Key Stage 3, with GCSE courses beginning in Year 9, has not been fully and effectively planned. In particular, as the former

Year 9 curriculum has simply been abandoned, the schemes of work do not provide adequate progression and depth of learning in all strands of mathematics, including in using and applying mathematics, from Year 7 to GCSE examination entry in Year 10. Arrangements for close monitoring and evaluation of the impact of early GCSE entry are required to ensure no adverse affects on students' achievement, particularly for the most able.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The mathematics faculty are a supportive team who are determined to bring about further improvement. The school has provided additional leadership capacity to support further development. The impact of actions to raise attainment, including through intervention, is seen in the improved progress of most groups of students, particularly for those in Key Stage 4.
- Although quality-assurance structures are well established, too little emphasis is placed on evaluating provision through a specific focus on a range of mathematical features. For example, while scrutiny of students' work identifies aspects of teachers' marking, it does not take sufficient account of the quality of students' mathematical learning, the depth and range of curriculum coverage or the extent to which students are taught work appropriate to their prior attainment and target grades and levels.
- Assessment information is used to identify underachievement but is not consistently accurate to be reliable, particularly in Key Stage 3. Progress judgements are sometimes based on too narrow a range of evidence for those judgements to be secure.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- updating schemes of work to ensure clearer progression across all strands of mathematics, including in using and applying mathematics, and in supporting the transition from Key Stage 3 to GCSE
- ensuring that teaching is consistently effective in developing students' deeper understanding of mathematics
- placing a sharper focus on mathematical detail when undertaking monitoring activities.

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