

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs S Bostock
Headteacher
Warton Nethersole's CofE Primary School
Maypole Road
Warton
Tamworth
B79 0HP

Dear Mrs Bostock

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 12 June 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 and shorter visits to two other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- In recent years, pupils at the school have not made enough progress in mathematics. However, as a result of focused work to raise standards, the progress that pupils make is now satisfactory.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and recognise its importance. They work together well in pairs and small groups. Their behaviour is good in class although at times they are too passive in their learning.
- More-able pupils have a good understanding of mathematics. However, less-able pupils have a more superficial understanding. For example, some Year 5 and Year 6 pupils recalled learning about methods to create a set of equivalent fractions, but did not remember what equivalent fractions in fact are.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- In the best teaching, teachers use a mix of open and closed questions to challenge pupils. The responses that pupils give enable teachers to assess the level of understanding, and pupils' success in each lesson is carefully recorded by teachers. However, not all teachers respond to incorrect answers in a way that explores misconceptions. In particular, lesson starter activities sometimes do not meet the needs of all abilities in the class so that some pupils give wrong answers to questions without being clear on the correct method.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons, and in data handling they make use of meaningful data. A Year 6 class investigated data relating to sustainability which linked to a topic also being explored in science. The pupils used information and communication technology (ICT) to display information and made choices as to the best methods to display particular results. A Year 3 class explored data relating to various classes' preferences for sporting activity as part of a wider project to influence the opportunities provided by the school.
- In most of the lessons, teachers arrange the teaching groups so that pupils know clearly what they are expected to achieve. However, sometimes pupils are unclear what is expected of them when they move into groups and this reduces their progress and suppresses their active involvement in learning. Sometimes during whole-class discussion the teacher is over dominant, again resulting in pupils taking a more passive role.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers use a published scheme which provides appropriate coverage of mathematical topics. This is supplemented by substantial additional material that teachers choose to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils regularly explore ideas within mathematics but not at a deep enough level, or with sufficient time available, to make enough impact on their understanding.
- The school's calculation policy provides a good framework for the coherent development of calculation as pupils progress through the school. However, opportunities to use the empty number line to illustrate subtraction as recommended by the policy are sometimes missed.
- Year 6 pupils are taking part in transition work with the local secondary school. They are gaining a good introduction to algebra, for example, which will be built on in their early weeks at the secondary school.
- Good links are made with other subjects, particularly science, so that pupils see mathematics applied in relevant contexts. Pupils have opportunities to use ICT in mathematics, sometimes in the context of cross-curricular work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- Leaders and managers have been successful in a determined drive to raise standards. In particular, the progress of every pupil in the school is monitored at regular intervals, and additional support is provided when any pupil falls below the expected rate of progress. In addition, the expectation for each pupil's progress is now higher so that teachers are now planning with greater ambition. These increased expectations have been successful in improving the progress that pupils make so that it has improved to satisfactory.
- High-quality development plans are also helping to drive improvement, and some of this work is carried out in partnership with other local small schools. By pooling its capacity with partner schools, the school has access to a wide network of support, including in 2010/11 from a specialist mathematics teacher funded by the National College for School Leadership as part of the Mathematics Specialist Teacher programme. This led to a focused action plan to raise standards in mathematics.
- The mathematics subject leader undertakes regular monitoring as part of the school's overall monitoring programme. This includes book trawls, analysis of teachers' planning, learning walks, pupil interviews and lesson observations together with detailed analysis of pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving teaching and learning by
 - placing more emphasis in teachers' planning on developing pupils' understanding
 - giving more time for pupils to explore and investigate the mathematical topics they are learning
 - ensuring that pupils understand clearly what they are expected to achieve and are more consistently actively engaged in their learning.

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

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector