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Miss C Harris
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Harris

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 13 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; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils enter the school with skills that are well below average and from this low base they make good progress. Pupils' attainment and progress have improved substantially over the last three years. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and work well. Some pupils give very clear explanations of their methods. A pupil in Year 6 gave a simple, but profound, explanation of the reason behind the method for dividing fractions. In a Year 4 class, a pupil with special educational needs explained clearly why finding the fraction of a quantity would lead to a smaller result as the denominator increased. He also used the correct vocabulary in forming his answer. Overall, however, pupils' skills in expressing their reasoning in mathematics are below average.

- Pupils are confident with calculation strategies. They have clear and reliable methods for each of the four rules, although lower-ability pupils have difficulty remembering how to handle decimals.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers' classrooms are well organised and lessons are brisk and purposeful. Teachers explain ideas clearly, and make good use of pupils' responses to questions to clarify these still further. Often pupils use small whiteboards to display their answers, or teachers use ways of selecting pupils to answer questions at random so that pupils all know they must think of the answer. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to give pupils a fuller role in explaining their understanding or their methods to the whole class.
- Teachers assess pupils' grasp of each topic effectively and use their knowledge of pupils' success or difficulties to adjust future planning. Teaching assistants show a good level of skill in the way they support pupils.
- A group of teachers and teaching assistants have received training in assisting pupils who have difficulties in understanding and calculating with number. This team provides intensive extra teaching to pupils in all year groups and this has made a significant impact on their progress. This is one reason why standards have risen over the last three years.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Teachers receive good guidance from the school's planning documents in ensuring good coverage of the mathematics curriculum. The calculation policy, introduced two years ago, is displayed in summary form in each classroom and is already thoroughly embedded into teachers' practice. The consistency and coherence of this policy are further factors that have led to the rapid improvement in standards. Each pupil has a 'numeracy passport' that gives a record of success in mental mathematics and targets for development.
- Pupils have wide opportunities to use and apply their mathematics in practical situations. In cross-curricular themed weeks, mathematics plays an important part, with a focus on the Olympic Games this term. In several year groups, visits are arranged to local shops so that pupils practise their numeracy skills in real situations. Pupils assist in a school bank that is sponsored by a local high street bank. They also use their mathematical skills in a range of other subjects.
- Pupils use information and communication technology in each year group. Through a large pool of laptops, this can be done without the need to move some distance to a computer room. Pupils also investigate mathematical ideas. Recently the school developed a new system where

each teacher keeps an ongoing record of pupils' achievement in discussing and exploring mathematics at regular intervals. Currently, this is highly successful in some classes, but in others some of the tasks being chosen are too closed in nature to enable pupils to demonstrate their skills in investigating.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is outstanding.

- With the subject leaders, you have been highly successful in raising standards substantially over a three-year period. Having identified clearly the shortcomings in the achievement of pupils, together you implemented a focused plan for improvement. Three elements of this plan are having a particular impact. The whole-school calculation policy coupled with the numeracy passports have been thoroughly implemented so that they are effective across the whole of this large primary school. The building of capacity to support pupils who have difficulties with number concepts is ensuring that they do not fall behind their peers wherever possible. The new system for recording pupils' progress in exploring, using and discussing mathematics is having an impact on fostering pupils' wider mathematical skills, although further embedding of this is needed.
- This plan also required the training of a group of teachers and teaching assistants in specific skills. Rather than rely on external trainers, leaders and managers ensured that certain members of staff gained the expertise and were given the time to train other colleagues.
- With the subject leaders, you have established a culture of high ambition. Rapid progress is expected of pupils and this is monitored regularly through an effective whole-school programme.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding fully the new systems for recording pupils' success in investigating and exploring in mathematics
- continuing to foster pupils' speaking skills, especially in explaining their understanding and methods.

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