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Miss S Kerswell
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Dear Miss Kerswell

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 22 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 brief visits to other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Most children join the school with mathematical knowledge and skills that are above expectations for their age and they reach above national average levels in problem solving, reasoning and number by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is significantly above the national average. The attainment of Year 6 pupils currently in the school indicates that above-average standards are being maintained: these pupils are on average a year ahead of expected levels.
- All groups of pupils make good progress during their time in the school, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Rigorous attention is paid to monitoring pupils' progress, with early identification of specific needs and support provided in lessons to address gaps in their knowledge and skills. Progress accelerates in Year 5 where

the creation of an additional class and arrangements to group pupils according to their ability allow more personalised learning.

- Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that, throughout the school, pupils have many opportunities to use and apply mathematical concepts to solve problems. Pupils record their discoveries in a variety of ways and are able to draw reasoned conclusions. They show highly positive attitudes and enthusiasm for the tasks they are set and work together well, showing good levels of resilience when faced with challenges. Pupils' achievement is enriched by the school's approach to foster their independence. For example, pupils seek support from 'help desk' resources, follow problem-solving prompts and volunteer as 'experts' to offer assistance to their peers.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Particular strengths of the teaching are the use of assessment information and flexibility in classroom organisation which ensure that pupils' work is closely matched to their needs and abilities. Teachers take good account of pupils' responses during lessons and amend tasks to address errors and misconceptions. In Year 6, for example, pupils were challenged to create an enlarged scale drawing of a member of their group. The class teacher noticed inaccuracies in pupils' calculations and addressed the issue swiftly.
- Teaching strategies are varied and tasks carefully constructed towards clearly explained learning objectives. Pupils are consequently interested, engaged and motivated in lessons. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to guide and support all groups of pupils. Adults are skilled in asking pupils searching questions that probe their understanding and challenge their thinking. However, teachers' imprecise use of mathematical vocabulary, for example referring to all calculations as 'sums', leads to potential misunderstanding. On occasion, opportunities to make appropriate links are missed, for instance between fractions and division.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that teachers' marking is making a significant contribution to their progress. It is thorough and provides precise guidance as to what they have done well. It sets out clear explanations and models to support knowledge and understanding and responds positively to pupils' self-assessment. Almost all marking ends with an additional challenge or key question to deepen pupils' understanding and to which they are given specific time to respond.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The curriculum is based on the Primary National Strategy Framework and supplemented with a published scheme. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that a whole-school calculation policy is well established and is ensuring continuity and progression throughout the school. Problem solving is integral to all areas of the curriculum. Younger pupils are encouraged to

spot patterns and relationships and to explain their observations. Older pupils justify their reasoning and make generalisations. Work on fractions is varied and increases in complexity year on year. By the time pupils complete Year 6, they are able to use and apply fractions and their decimal and percentage equivalents in a variety of contexts in mathematics and in other subject areas. A recent, successful initiative to improve pupils' recall of multiplication tables has contributed well to their manipulation of fractions.

- Good use is made of information and communication technology to enhance learning as well as engaging and motivating pupils. For example, Year 1 pupils received immediate feedback on their instructions as they used computer programs and a programmable floor robot to learn about half and quarter turns.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- You and the subject leader have an accurate view of the school's strengths and next steps in terms of development in mathematics. Improvement priorities are sharply focused on improving outcomes for pupils. Meticulous monitoring of pupils' progress ensures early identification of pupils who are in danger of falling behind expected levels. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the school's work enable leaders to measure the effectiveness of their actions and amend practice accordingly. Professional development needs are identified through analysis of pupils' responses to test questions, written work, in discussions with pupils and in the observation of their learning.
- Sustained improvements in pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, and leadership and management reflect the school's good capacity to improve further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- enhancing teachers' subject knowledge to support teaching approaches that encourage conceptual understanding, and ensure mathematical vocabulary is used accurately.

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

Sarah Warboys
Additional Inspector