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Mrs A Vaughan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Vaughan

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 19 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 governors, staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of three lessons; and brief visits to seven other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children join school with mathematical knowledge and skills that are in line with those expected for their age. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, attainment is broadly average. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress from their starting points. The school's assessment data for those pupils currently in the school and analysis of their work indicate that standards are rising. In particular, in Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 is increasing.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that work on fractions is frequent and varied. However, pupils' workbooks show little evidence of any calculation strategies as pupils write only answers to questions set. In lessons, pupils write their informal

recordings on whiteboards and immediately erase them. As a consequence, teachers are unable to analyse pupils' methods to plan work that addresses effectively their errors and misconceptions.

- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- In all the lessons observed, good relationships supported learning. Strengths of the better teaching include teachers taking account of assessment information to plan lessons that are appropriately matched to pupils' needs and abilities. Learning objectives are shared explicitly with pupils and presented alongside the particular context of learning. As a result, pupils are clear about what they are learning and what is expected of them. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils explained that they were learning to solve problems in the context of fractions. They made good progress in being able to use and apply their new knowledge of fractions while learning how to work out logically the fraction of different coloured cubes in 'mystery boxes'.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is clear. It identifies 'glow' and 'grow' comments which indicate what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve. Teachers pose searching questions in their written feedback to pupils which extends their thinking.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The Primary National Strategy Framework and a textbook scheme provide the basis for teachers' planning and are supplemented by a variety of resources. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to use and apply mathematics in other subjects. They are increasingly solving problems as an integral part of mathematics curriculum provision, though this practice is not consistent in all year groups.
- Progression throughout the school in the development of fractions is satisfactory. Inspection evidence found a range of resources being used effectively to support pupils' understanding of fractions and related notation. However, scrutiny of pupils' work showed examples of pupils being taught to manipulate fractions by applying 'rules', such as, 'you always have to put the smaller number at the top'. This incorrect guidance misleads pupils and limits their conceptual understanding. The heavy reliance on completion of worksheets restricts opportunities for pupils to record their working independently and maximise their learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The last two years have seen significant changes in teaching staff, key leadership roles and governance. The current subject leader has been in post since January 2012 and is embarking on the leadership role with enthusiasm, fully supported by other leaders and managers. A whole-school calculation policy has been recently introduced and is already ensuring a more consistent approach. Improvement priorities and teachers' professional development needs are being identified through the analysis of pupils' work, direct observation of teaching, and in regular meetings during which staff discuss pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders, including the mathematics governor, have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics provision. Good use is being made of the school's existing good practice and links with other schools to improve the quality of teaching. Recent assessments of pupils' learning indicate that this is beginning to pay dividends. The subject leader is benefiting from working jointly with other, more experienced practitioners, especially in evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken in terms of its impact on pupils' achievement. Improved systems for monitoring pupils' progress are enabling teachers to identify gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding. Lesson planning and intervention programmes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are therefore focused on their needs. Consequently, all groups of pupils are making better progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment and accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics by ensuring:
 - regular opportunities for pupils to develop problem-solving approaches are extended to all year groups
 - a greater emphasis is placed on pupils' independent recording of their work and retaining key elements for teachers' analysis
- providing guidance for staff on teaching approaches that encourage conceptual understanding
- developing the role of the subject leader in driving improvement.

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