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Ms L Sharratt
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Dear Ms Sharratt

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 29 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 two lessons and brief visits to 10 other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children enter 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 most recent assessment of pupils currently in the school shows that rates of progress are increasing. A greater proportion of the higher attaining pupils are reaching Level 3 in Key Stage 1.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the implementation of the school's calculation policy is paying dividends. It is ensuring continuity and progression in methods of calculation throughout the school. Good use is made of models and images that underpin pupils' conceptual understanding of numbers and the number system.

- Pupils' positive attitudes and consistently good behaviour contribute well to learning mathematics in lessons.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- In all the lessons observed, teachers frequently used questioning and 'talk partners' to enable pupils to share their ideas and this helped to clarify their thinking. Adults praised and valued pupils' contributions in small-group work and in class discussion. Teaching assistants were generally well deployed in the main part of lessons to support individuals and groups of pupils.
- Strengths of the better teaching included the use of varied teaching strategies which placed learning in meaningful contexts and involved practical activities that interested pupils. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson, for example, pupils learnt that sandwiches they had made themselves could be halved in different ways. They worked out how many cakes had been baked if a well-known story character had eaten half of them. In Year 6, pupils' thinking was challenged well as they sorted statements relating to fractions, decimals and percentages into 'always true', 'sometimes true' and 'never true'. Resources were used effectively to develop pupils' understanding of fraction concepts. Despite these strengths, time is not used consistently well and the pace of learning slows as a result. The work pupils are set is not consistently challenging and teaching assistants do not always support independent learning effectively.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that teachers' marking is regular and sets out clear models to support pupils' understanding of place value and calculation methods. While some examples of good practice in written feedback were noted, this is not consistent throughout the school, particularly in providing pupils with precise information about what they have done well, what they need to do to improve their work or how they might extend their ideas.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The Primary National Strategy Framework forms the basis for teachers' lesson planning. In particular, the 'pitch and expectation' materials help teachers to ensure that the work set for pupils is pitched at an appropriate level. Lesson planning takes account of pupils' errors and misconceptions and teachers use such information appropriately to plan future provision. A curriculum review has led to increased opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in other subjects.
- Progression throughout the school in the development of fractions is satisfactory. However, pupils' knowledge and skills of fractions are not developed in sufficient breadth and depth to secure comprehensive understanding of the underlying concepts, particularly when applying them in unfamiliar contexts.

- Although pupils regularly solve word problems, opportunities for them to use and apply mathematics more widely are limited because problem-solving strategies and investigative approaches are not taught explicitly and systematically.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- You have secured a cohesive leadership team, clearly focused on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. Rates of progress in mathematics for almost all groups of pupils are improving. Meticulous monitoring of pupils' progress enables the early identification of those in danger of making insufficient progress so that appropriate action can be taken. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of targeted intervention. Regular pupil-progress meetings with staff enable a professional dialogue about training needs and identify where additional support may be needed.
- Monitoring activities take account of a wide variety of evidence and help to identify school-improvement priorities. For example, they have highlighted the need for the curriculum to focus specifically on the development of pupils' mathematical language skills so that they can more readily access the curriculum. The subject leader has trialled a specific intervention programme to address this particular need. Early indications are that this provision is proving effective in accelerating pupils' progress and in increasing their self-confidence.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment and accelerating progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers use time effectively and challenge pupils of all abilities through the set activities and the support that they receive in lessons
 - teachers' marking of pupils' work enables them to know what they have done well, what they need to do next and how their thinking might be further developed
 - pupils have regular opportunities to develop different approaches to problem solving.

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