

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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Mr A Rigg
Headteacher
Fordley Community Primary School
Dudley Drive
Dudley
Cramlington
NE23 7AL

Dear Mr Rigg

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 3 July 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, two undertaken jointly with staff from the school; and brief visits to five further lessons, including a 'numbers count' intervention session for pupils in Year 2.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Since 2010, following a period of declining standards in mathematics, pupils' achievement across the school has shown rapid and sustained improvement. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with mathematical knowledge and skills that are typically below those expected for their age. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that, by the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly average overall. Although progress is stronger in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's starting points on entry to Year 1 vary according to the differences in the cohorts of children from year to year.

- Pupils' good progress continues through Key stage 2 and, overall, attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average. In 2011, pupils' progress in mathematics across all significantly sized groups was better than for comparable groups nationally. Inspection evidence, including a scrutiny of pupils' work and the observation of learning in lessons, confirms this trend of rising achievement in mathematics.
- Pupils' enjoy mathematics lessons and benefit from the targeted support they receive from teachers and other adults. Although the use of 'talk partners' to promote discussion is well established across the school, opportunities to develop pupils' higher-order thinking and reasoning skills through questioning and dialogue are sometimes missed which slows the pace of learning, in particular for some more-able pupils.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- The impact of teaching on learning over time is good. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils' learn mathematics in a variety of ways, supported by teaching materials that capture and sustain pupils' interest and enjoyment of mathematics. Pupils' books show a good range of activities, including, in many cases, photographs of pupils engaged in group work, mathematical investigations and project work.
- Much teaching provides opportunities for pupils to learn mathematics through contexts that they understand and recognise. A brisk pace ensures that little learning time is lost and pupils' interest and engagement is maintained. Teachers adapt tasks well to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, although this adaptation is frequently more effective for lower-attaining pupils than it is for higher-attaining pupils. In some instances, learning slows because teaching lacks clarity about what will be learnt or teachers do not help pupils understand clearly the key steps in learning needed for them to meet the objective of the lesson.
- Books are marked regularly and pupils respond to teachers' feedback in 'target time' allocated at the start of lessons. However, not all teachers check routinely the accuracy of pupils' responses to this feedback so some incorrect work is not identified promptly.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Currently, mathematics is taught in three mixed-age sets across Years 4 to 6, in a mixed Year 5/6 class and in two setted groups in Year 3. Elsewhere in the school, mathematics classes are organised in mixed-ability groupings. Leaders and managers review this structure each year to ensure that the setting arrangements in mathematics serve the needs of all groups of pupils well.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is well matched to pupils' needs and interests. A focus on using and applying mathematics ensures that

pupils benefit from frequent opportunities to develop their understanding through investigations, problem solving, topic work and mathematics set in a wide range of different contexts. A whole-school calculation policy has ensured greater consistency and better progression in the use of calculation approaches across the school. Intervention strategies, such as 'numbers count' in Key Stage 1, are helping many lower-attaining pupils in particular to gain greater confidence and make faster progress.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- The impact of leaders and managers can be seen in the trend of improvement in achievement in mathematics. Self-evaluation is accurate and draws upon a good range of evidence in determining the effectiveness of teaching over time. Consistency of approach is assured through a series of non-negotiable elements to planning, teaching and assessment established by managers at the school. Support for teaching is well embedded, including through the school's own 'teaching toolkit'. Robust and effective action is taken where necessary to tackle instances of weaker teaching.
- Levels of accountability have been greatly strengthened. Regular progress meetings ensure a sharp focus on the achievement of all pupils. Although a whole-school approach to developing a greater understanding of progression in calculation has been developed, this has not been extended to consider progression in other strands of mathematics, including, for example, fractions. Leaders and managers in mathematics have undertaken a review of curriculum coverage to ensure that the planned curriculum is appropriately balanced and meets pupils' needs well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all teaching is consistently effective in developing questioning and dialogue that promote pupils' thinking and reasoning skills, particularly for more-able pupils
- extending further the work to develop teachers' greater understanding of progression to include different strands of mathematics.

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

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector