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Mr I Price
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Dear Mr Price

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 5 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 you; and brief visits to two further lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with mathematical knowledge and skills that are typically in line with those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress overall from entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2, to attain standards that are, generally, broadly average, although they showed a marked fall in 2011.
- Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 2 and, by the end of Year 6, reach standards that are broadly average. Although half of the pupils in Year 6 in 2011 reached standards in mathematics above that expected for their age, a notable difference in the attainment of boys and girls continued a pattern from previous years. Inspection evidence, including observation of learning in lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' work,

confirms that this gap is closing, although overall levels of attainment remain broadly average overall.

- Pupils generally enjoy their mathematics lessons and almost all are keen to do well. However, due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, pupils' experience of learning mathematics varies considerably. As a result, rates of progress made by pupils in different year groups are uneven.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The impact of teaching on learning over time is satisfactory, although considerable variation exists across the school. In most year groups, the emphasis on securing pupils' skills in number and calculation is strong. This focus is seen in the regularity with which many pupils are exposed to repetitive exercises, often set without contexts. These develop skills and techniques that some pupils do not fully understand.
- In an effective lesson about Greek mathematics, groups of Year 5 pupils worked with great interest and enthusiasm exploring perfect, abundant and deficient numbers and did so with little direct input from the teacher. However, more generally, the development of pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics is inconsistent. The quality of teachers' questioning is also not consistently effective in developing pupils' deeper understanding of mathematics, including through pupils' discussing their mathematics with adults and with each other.
- Marking is regular and most pupils take pride in their work. However, teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work varies, and not all teachers pick up effectively enough on misspellings, for example. In some cases, teachers simply tick or cross pupils' work and do not focus enough on identifying and responding to gaps in pupils' understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The school uses the Primary National Strategy materials, supplemented by resources produced by the local authority. However, leaders recognise that some teaching relies too heavily on resources from commercial schemes. Pupils enjoy using computers to support their learning and took part successfully in an on-line mathematics competition. Useful links with a secondary school lead to opportunities for some pupils to extend their learning in mathematics.
- A scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books shows weaknesses in the development of their skills in using and applying mathematics. The school has identified that there is insufficient support for teachers in developing and assessing pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Despite a prolonged period of significant turbulence in senior leadership and disruption caused by a building programme, achievement has been maintained at satisfactory levels. More robust tracking systems to track pupils' progress and identify underachievement have been introduced and these are helping to improve progress and clarify the extent of variation across the school. However, although this has identified where support is needed, the strategic leadership of mathematics has been weak.
- In conjunction with the subject leader for mathematics, you have quickly identified a number of urgent priorities to drive further improvement in mathematics. Foremost of these are the need to work as a whole school to develop a shared vision for mathematics teaching, to agree common expectations and to establish more effective quality assurance processes. Procedures to ensure greater accountability for pupils' outcomes are not fully in place, including through teachers' performance management.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring a more effective balance between developing pupils' deeper understanding of mathematics and practice in the use of skills and techniques
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to discuss their mathematics with adults and with each other
- ensuring that the curriculum provides for the progressive development and robust assessment of pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics
- strengthening the leadership and management of mathematics by:
 - working as a whole school to develop a shared vision of effective mathematics teaching
 - implementing a rigorous and robust programme of monitoring and evaluation in order to secure greater consistency in the quality of planning and teaching of mathematics across the school.

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