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Mr M Land  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Land

### **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 with David Edwards HMI on 12 February 2013 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; and observation of every teacher and a brief working session with some pupils.

### **The overall effectiveness of mathematics requires improvement.**

#### **Achievement in mathematics requires improvement.**

- Pupils make progress that is broadly in line with national averages but this picture masks some significant variation between classes and in different aspects of mathematics. Nevertheless, more able pupils are successful at the higher levels in national tests at age 11.
- The variation is most evident between Years 3 and 6 and some key inequalities remain, with boys usually outperforming girls in mathematics. Lower and middle ability pupils make less secure progress than the more able. This inconsistent performance leaves the current Year 6 cohort with some catching up to do.
- An important weakness is pupils' lack of fluency with number when carrying out calculations. Strengths in pupils' achievement, on the other hand, include a good knowledge of shape, space and measures including, for example, accurate estimation of size and capacity and analysis of data.

The overall picture, however, is one of inconsistent achievement throughout the school.

- Pupils can use a range of calculation strategies, albeit inconsistently, but are not asked to apply this knowledge in solving more challenging problems and thus have not fully developed this key skill.

### **Teaching in mathematics requires improvement.**

- While constructive relationships between adults and pupils lead to positive attitudes to mathematics throughout the school, sessions too frequently lack genuine challenge and are at times dominated by the teacher. This reduces the opportunity for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and caps their progress. Teachers usually accept pupils' brief answers rather than expecting them to develop their thinking in greater depth and some teachers spend too long explaining tasks when pupils could get on with them much more quickly.
- Teachers plan sessions thoughtfully, providing meaningful activities and including new technology where appropriate. For example, in one lesson pupils were using voting handsets to generate bar charts which led to a good level of interpretation and discussion. However, in some lessons teachers stuck rigidly to their plans, despite pupils showing an enthusiasm for higher levels of challenge.
- Marking is up to date and accurate but does not always offer developmental comments. Pupils are routinely asked to assess their own learning in mathematics lessons but this information is not used in every class to help plan future lessons. As a consequence, lessons tend to drift towards average performance and expectation.

### **The curriculum in mathematics requires improvement.**

- The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on number work but is not always consistently or coherently implemented. For example, pupils are sometimes asked to repeat work they have covered well in previous years, which slows progress and limits the scope for extension. The curriculum is stronger in its coverage of shape, space and measures and younger pupils receive a suitably practical approach to the subject. Too frequently, the number problems set for pupils are insufficiently challenging.
- Opportunities for the curriculum to be enriched by additional activities and the use of technology include 'maths days' and work with other schools nearby, for example a 'maths adventure' which had a particular focus on money and business planning.
- The school identified mathematics as a core priority in 2011/12 and engaged with extra training and support. The intention was to generate a more creative and innovative approach to the subject. This has been a partial success but inconsistencies have generated patchy progress. Monitoring of the impact of such initiatives has been limited.

## **Leadership and management of mathematics require improvement.**

- Leadership in the subject has changed in the last two years. The subject leader has implemented some changes successfully, such as a useful system to track pupils' progress. She has also led training and ensures the school is well resourced in mathematics. However her heavy teaching commitment has prevented her from developing the role beyond this. Lesson observations are infrequent as is the scrutiny of pupils' workbooks. As a consequence, while the school is broadly aware of the relative strengths and weaknesses in mathematics, it lacks sufficient detail to make a greater impact on improvement.
- The school has recently become an academy but still accesses support from the Local Authority to provide occasional professional development, which is helpful.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- improving the quality of teaching by raising expectations and ensuring a clear focus on problem solving
- enhancing the frequency of monitoring in the subject by mapping out a calendar of activity that includes lesson observations, book scrutiny and team teaching to supplement the system to track pupils' progress
- developing and implementing a new calculation policy, which captures progression in what pupils are required to learn (and when) and sets higher expectations for pupils' achievement in number, and monitoring to check its effectiveness.

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.

Yours sincerely

**Ceri Morgan**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**