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4 March 2012

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Dear Mr Vallack

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 25 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 four lessons and eight part lessons during a learning walk.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with mathematical skills below those expected for their age and often well below in calculation. They make good progress so that by the end of their Reception year attainment is broadly average. Children's recognition of number and shape remain stronger than their skills in calculation.
- Pupils' good learning and progress continue through Key Stages 1 and 2. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average. It dipped in 2012 when not enough pupils, particularly girls, achieved the higher levels. Recent assessment results for Year 6 pupils indicate that attainment remains above average for boys and girls.
- The school provides good quality support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs as well as pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, enabling them to make good progress.

- Pupils make good connections between fractions, percentages and decimals and use these links and other skills confidently when solving mathematical problems. They enjoy problem solving but would like more opportunities to solve real-life problems in their homework and other subjects.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and are keen to learn. They settle quickly to activities and with enthusiasm. Their good behaviour and attitudes to learning contribute well to their progress.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teaching of mathematics in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. A wide range of resources is provided to help children explore and learn mathematics. Children are encouraged to use accurate vocabulary for calculating as well as for exploring shapes and measurements.
- Good teaching continues through Key Stages 1 and 2. A common strength of all the teaching is the strong relationships teachers have with pupils. Typically, the pace of lessons is good which ensures that pupils are motivated and keen to learn. Classrooms create a positive climate for pupils to learn and pupils' good mathematics work is visible around school.
- Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively so that learning is visual and pupils are engaged effectively. Teachers ask questions to check pupils' learning but do not always probe pupils' thinking to fully extend or deepen their learning.
- Targets for individual pupils are used well. Through self-assessment and regular checking by teachers, pupils always know what they have achieved and what they have to learn next.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in the careful planning of lessons. Tasks are tailored to pupils' needs but activities for more-able pupils do not consistently provide sufficient challenge.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Teachers use the Primary National Strategy materials to ensure that all relevant areas are covered and to help their long and medium term planning. Mathematics is taught as a discrete subject and is planned carefully to ensure progression for all groups of pupils. The school makes good use of classrooms as well as outdoor areas to organise activities that promote conceptual understanding.
- Pupils have regular access to a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils have many opportunities to use different ICT resources. They use floor Beebots, for example, to explore quarter turns when investigating fractions. Pupils particularly like practical activities, such as technology, which teachers use successfully to reinforce pupils' learning.
- The curriculum is designed specifically to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Teaching assistants are well trained so that they can provide a good range of support programmes tailored to pupils' individual needs.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The school's evaluation of mathematics is thorough. As a result of analysing pupils' termly assessment data, pupils who may be underachieving or weaknesses in pupils' mathematical understanding are quickly identified and support put in place. Pupils' end-of-year assessments are analysed to check for gaps in their learning. This information is then used to help teachers with their planning.
- Mathematics lessons are observed regularly. Teachers receive individual feedback and specific areas of development are followed up at the next round of observations.
- Teachers monitor pupils' books together to ensure that they have the same expectations of pupils' work. The school has implemented a number of strategies to ensure that boys and girls achieve as well as each other. Recent assessments indicate that these are proving to be successful.
- The school has clear focus on developing and improving mathematics. Staff benefit from a wide range of training and sometimes share good practice. In addition, leaders regularly organise in-house training to reinforce high expectations.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the quality of teaching further by ensuring that:
 - pupils make better use of skills learnt in mathematics lessons to solve practical real-life problems in other subjects
 - pupils who aspire to the higher levels are consistently challenged
 - teachers provide questions that regularly challenge and deepen pupils' conceptual understanding
- extending the opportunities staff have to share and build on good practice.

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

Sue J Sharkey
Additional Inspector