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Mr M F Melling  
Headteacher  
Brindle Gregson Lane Primary School  
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Dear Mr Melling

### **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 27 February 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; and observation of three lessons, including a joint lesson observation with you, and five part lessons during a learning walk.

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

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

- Children usually start school in the Reception class with mathematical knowledge and skills in line with those expected at this age. They make good progress as a result of the staff's good use of the indoor and outdoor environments and a wide range of practical activities that help children to explore numbers or shapes.
- As pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 so that attainment is generally above average and often significantly above average. Progress in Key Stage 2 varies from one year group to the next. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has similarly fluctuated from year to year. It rose to significantly above average in 2012. Although a much larger proportion of pupils made expected progress in 2012 than in 2011, not enough pupils are making good progress, especially the more able. Overall, pupils' progress requires improvement, especially in Key Stage 2.

- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs as well as pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding also make progress that requires improvement.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. Most say they enjoy mathematics, particularly when practical activities are involved.

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

- The most effective teaching engages pupils well so that they are enthusiastic and excited about learning mathematics. Teaching of mathematics varies across the school with evidence of good teaching seen during the survey visit. In these lessons, teachers use a range of lively and imaginative activities that capture pupils' interest, enabling them to make good progress. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace; teachers' explanations are clear, reflecting their good subject knowledge. In a Year 6 lesson, very good use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to illustrate equivalent fractions. This helped pupils to understand the importance of the numerator and denominator. Teaching of this quality is not evident across the whole of Key Stage 2.
- Teachers' planning generally matches pupils' different abilities. However, assessment information is not used rigorously enough to ensure that pupils, particularly the more able, are always challenged. At times, different groups of pupils tackle the same work, particularly calculations.
- Teachers enable pupils to develop effective skills of collaboration and discussion by providing opportunities to work in pairs and small groups. Pupils question each other and are happy to share and explore their thinking. There are also times when pupils can develop independence and responsibility for their own learning.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers' skilful questioning and use of practical activities ensure that pupils are fully involved in lessons and learning builds on previous knowledge and understanding. At other times, questioning is not deep enough to reshape tasks during lessons.
- Problem solving, often on worksheets, is a regular feature in mathematics lessons, allowing pupils to use some of the skills they have learnt. However teachers do not create enough opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills regularly in other subjects to enable real-life practical problems to be solved.

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

- The school's mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced, catering effectively for boys and girls. The Primary National Strategy Framework is used effectively, helping to provide consistency and aid pupils' progress in knowledge and skills. Mathematics is taught as a discrete subject and is sometimes used in other subjects.
- Teachers often make good use of different resources during lessons including the interactive whiteboard. However, pupils do not have enough

opportunities to use information and communication technology to explore mathematics further or to use it to gather and record information.

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

- You took up post in September 2012 and have initiated a focus on raising standards in mathematics. This includes improving teaching in Key Stage 2 so that it becomes at least consistently good. The recently introduced system for tracking pupils' progress is beginning to identify and strengthen weaker areas of mathematics. Regular pupil-progress meetings focus closely on pupils who are at risk of underachieving so that support can be put in place swiftly.
- Leaders have implemented a regular system for scrutinising pupils' books and observing lessons. Following observations, teachers are informed of points for improvement. Leaders ensure that these are followed up during the next round of observations.
- Senior leaders demonstrate effective and sometimes outstanding practice as teachers. The quality of their teaching though is not shared enough with staff throughout the school. While the profile of mathematics is good in some classrooms helping to aid pupils' learning, its importance as a subject is not visible throughout the whole school.

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

- raising the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that teachers:
  - use assessment information consistently to plan work that always challenges and closely matches the needs and abilities of pupils, particularly the more able
  - have sufficient time to share and learn from existing good practice in the school
- providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematical skills through practical problem solving in other subjects and through using ICT as a tool to explore mathematics even further
- raising the profile of mathematics throughout 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

**Sue J Sharkey**  
**Additional Inspector**