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21 March 2013

Mr K Quigley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Quigley

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 21 March 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 the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of two lessons; and brief visits to three other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics requires improvement.

Achievement in mathematics requires improvement.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with mathematical skills and abilities that are expected for their age. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time Year 6 pupils leave the school, attainment is average.
- Most groups of pupils, including those pupils who need extra help, make progress in line with expected levels but too few pupils make good progress. In Years 5 and 6, pupils make progress at a faster rate because of better teaching. Of the Year 6 pupils who took national tests in 2012, the proportion of middle-attaining pupils making more than expected progress did not compare favourably with national averages.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that their knowledge and understanding of fractions are not developed in sufficient depth. Their work focuses chiefly on finding fractions of shapes and quantities at similar levels of difficulty in

different year groups. As a result, there is much to do at the end of Key Stage 2. Year 6 pupils are able to confidently and accurately interchange fractions, decimals and percentages.

- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and show positive attitudes to learning. In a few lessons, the slow pace of learning results in pupils losing interest and demonstrating low-level, disruptive behaviour.

Teaching in mathematics requires improvement.

- In the more effective lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of learning and behaviour. Pupils are engaged in practical tasks that help to maintain their interest. Teachers' effective use of 'talk partners' enables pupils to share their ideas and clarify their thinking. In a Year 5 and 6 class, for example, pupils talked together to decide where to place fractions when ordering them on a number line.
- In other lessons, the work that teachers set for pupils is not adapted sufficiently well to take account of pupils' different levels of skills, knowledge and understanding. This limits their progress. Teachers' introductions and explanations are too long which reduces the time pupils have to work on their own and discover mathematical relationships for themselves.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work has improved recently. On the whole, it encourages pupils and identifies what they have done well. It increasingly provides guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. Teachers frequently provide examples, predominantly of calculations, for pupils to follow and use as a model for their own working. Pupils are given regular opportunities to respond to teachers' comments and questions so that they can learn from their errors.

The curriculum in mathematics requires improvement.

- The Primary National Strategy Framework forms the basis for teachers' planning, supplemented by a variety of other published resources. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to use fractions to solve simple word problems and to identify patterns and relationships in numbers and fractions. Adults give children in the Early Years Foundation Stage lots of opportunities to learn the concept of 'half'.
- Although progression of fractions is in line with expectations for different year groups, the basic concepts are repeated and consequently, pupils do not deepen their knowledge and understanding of fractions sufficiently well before moving on to the next topic. In some classes, the overuse of worksheets restricts opportunities for pupils to record their work independently and maximise their learning.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows good use of number lines and informal recordings in supporting pupils' understanding of place value and their skills in calculation. The school's calculation policy provides a secure framework for staff of models and images that underpin pupils' conceptual understanding of numbers and the number system.

- In discussions with pupils, they explained the usefulness of visual resources, such as the 'fraction wall', which supported them particularly well in understanding the equivalence of fractions and in being able to explain which of two given fractions was the largest.

Leadership and management of mathematics require improvement.

- You took up your post in January 2013 and have already gained an extensive knowledge and awareness of what the school does well in mathematics teaching and what is needed for it to improve. Supported well by governors, you have established a sense of urgency among the staff to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- Secure arrangements for the leadership of teaching and the management of performance are in place. 'Pupil progress meetings' enable you and class teachers to identify individuals and groups of pupils who are not making enough progress. This information is used to determine where support for teaching is required and which pupils need extra help.
- The subject leader provides specific support to colleagues by providing training and developing teaching. Opportunities for her to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement actions are at an early stage, having been limited in the past.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- accelerating pupils' progress and raising their attainment in mathematics by ensuring that all staff:
 - set work for pupils that is more closely matched to their different starting points
 - use time more effectively in lessons to increase opportunities for pupils to work on their own and find things out for themselves
 - place greater emphasis on pupils' independent recording of their work
- strengthening the role of the subject leader in checking the effectiveness of actions to improve mathematics teaching on raising pupils' achievement.

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

Sarah Warboys
Additional Inspector