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Mr P Bradley  
Principal  
All Saints Catholic Centre for Learning (VA)  
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Dear Mr Bradley

### **Ofsted 2013–14 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 10 and 11 June 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: meetings with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of five lessons, all undertaken jointly with staff from the school. The inspector also made shorter visits to four further lessons, including to part of a revision morning arranged for students in Year 11.

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

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

- Students join the school with levels of attainment that are typically below, or well below, those seen nationally. In recent years, an increasing proportion of students has secured a C grade or better in GCSE mathematics. The proportion of students making at least three levels of progress in mathematics from Key Stage 2 to GCSE is also rising.
- However, achievement is not yet good because too few students exceed this nationally expected benchmark for progress. In particular, the number of pupils achieving a grade A or A\* in GCSE mathematics is too low. Although the achievement of students supported through the pupil premium is also rising, in the examinations in 2012, the attainment of

these students was equivalent to around 1½ grades per student lower when compared to the attainment of other students nationally.

- Students say they enjoy learning mathematics because their teachers make lessons enjoyable and varied, with opportunities to learn mathematics in different ways, such as through 'treasure hunts', card sorts and puzzles. As a result, they develop good attitudes to mathematics and are positive about the subject and its value. However, only a very small number of students continue to study mathematics in the sixth form, and with mixed results. This is because too few students are prepared effectively for the demands of post-16 AS/A-level courses in mathematics.

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

- The overall quality of teaching is rising although requires further improvement to become good. Leaders have taken effective action to address instances of weak teaching. Most lessons are planned to allow students to work collaboratively to solve problems and tackle a range of interesting tasks.
- Teaching in mathematics is not yet good, however, because teachers do not place enough emphasis on securing good quality learning in every lesson. Although teachers have ensured a focus on sustaining students' engagement and building confidence in mathematics, they do not check well enough that students have grasped key concepts before moving learning on to the next part of the lesson. As a result, in some instances, students' errors and misconceptions are not tackled promptly enough to prevent them from becoming barriers to future learning.
- The support provided for low-attaining students is good and they typically make at least expected progress over time. However, for other students, particularly the most-able, not all teaching challenges them to make good progress. For example, not enough questioning deepens students' thinking or requires them to reason and to justify their answers. In some cases, teachers are too quick to provide support when students encounter difficulties. Teaching frequently emphasises the application of techniques which students do not fully understand.
- A scrutiny of students' work shows that they sometimes tackle questions that are very similar in nature or do not spend enough time learning about topics to secure good understanding. As a result, some students do not have the skills to tackle a range of problems of different types or set in unfamiliar contexts. While marking is regular and detailed, it does not always pinpoint well enough how students can improve their work and address misconceptions in learning.

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

- The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is improving. A broad range of tasks and activities are readily available to make learning more interesting and varied. Although almost all teaching makes good use of these materials, the guidance provided for teachers does not ensure

greater consistency in the approaches used, or place enough emphasis on how to develop better mathematical learning over time.

- The quality of assessment information is improving and is helping teachers to identify gaps in students' learning. However, this information is being used to target a wide range of intervention and support, rather than to systematically improve the ways in which the curriculum is mathematics is planned and taught. The quality of the curriculum, coupled with a policy of early entry to mathematics examinations, is not fully effective in meeting the needs of more-able students in particular.

### **Leadership and management of mathematics are good.**

- Leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve provision in mathematics. They undertake regular and detailed checks on the quality of teaching and of students' work. The evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate and pinpoints subject-specific features well. As a result, teaching and the curriculum are improving.
- The subject leader for mathematics provides a very strong role model and has established a shared vision for how achievement in mathematics can be raised. While the plan for teachers' professional development is detailed, it is not linked closely to the outcomes of the monitoring of teaching quality.

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

- raising the quality of teaching in mathematics to at least good by ensuring that teachers:
  - check the quality of students' learning in lessons and react promptly to address misconceptions and gaps in learning
  - place an emphasis on progression in learning in all lessons and on students' deeper understanding of the methods they learn
- improving the curriculum by strengthening further the quality of guidance to teachers to ensure greater consistency and quality in teaching and thereby reduce the reliance on intervention and support for students who fall behind
- ensuring that the professional development provided for teachers is more closely linked to the findings from checks made on teaching quality.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics in the school.

As explained previously, 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**