

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs C Taylor
Headteacher
Haslucks Green School
Haslucks Green Road
Shirley
Solihull
West Midlands
B90 2EJ

Dear Mrs Taylor

Ofsted 2013–14 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 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: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons with brief visits to two other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics requires improvement.

Achievement in mathematics requires improvement.

- Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 3, and by the time Year 6 pupils leave the school, is above average. Most groups of pupils, including those who need extra help, make progress in line with expected levels. Too few make good progress, although rates of progress are improving across the school as teaching has strengthened. Of the Year 6 pupils who took the national tests in 2012, the proportion who made more than expected progress did not compare favourably with national averages.
- Work in pupils' books and recent assessments show that all current Year 6 pupils are on course to make at least expected progress and that more pupils are set to make good progress. In addition, more pupils are set to reach the higher Level 5 in 2013.

- Extra funding in the form of the pupil premium has been used successfully to provide additional teaching time, one-to-one tuition and personalised learning resources. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium support in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them.
- An overwhelming majority of pupils behave well in lessons. They are attentive and take part enthusiastically in the interesting, practical activities that are provided for them. Their positive attitudes make a good contribution to their learning.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- In contrast with the past, when teaching did not ensure that all pupils made good enough progress, most groups of pupils currently in the school are now making faster progress. In all lessons observed, the work that teachers set for pupils was at just the right level of difficulty to move their learning forward. Occasionally, pupils were not provided with sufficient opportunity to work on their own and find things out for themselves.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of learning and behaviour. Teachers provide activities that are engaging, practical and purposeful and this helps to capture and maintain pupils' interest. In Year 3, pupils rapidly developed their understanding of charts and graphs in deciding which type would best help them analyse the 'runs' scored in the international cricket tournament they were going to visit later in the week.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge, clear explanations and imaginative resources support pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts well. They make good use of 'talk partners' which helps pupils to share their thinking with and clarify their ideas. Teachers observe and listen carefully to pupils and plan activities that tackle their common errors and misconceptions. In Year 3, for example, the teacher elicited from pupils the importance of making sure they start at zero in order to measure accurately.

The curriculum in mathematics requires improvement.

- Curriculum planning is based on the Primary National Strategy Framework, supplemented by a purchased scheme and a range of other resources. In the sample of Year 3 and 5 pupils' work, an overuse of worksheets has restricted opportunities for pupils to record their work independently. Teachers' planning is informed by assessment information and helps pupils to work towards the next National Curriculum level. A whole-school policy ensures continuity and progression in calculation methods in different year groups.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books, including their 'cross-curricular maths' books, shows the significant work you have done to increase planned opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills in mathematics when learning about other subjects. Problem solving is an integral part of the mathematics curriculum and involves an element of using and applying new learning in a meaningful context.

- In recent months, the school has increased its provision of one-to-one support for pupils at all levels, which addresses specific gaps in their knowledge and skills. Consequently, these pupils have made progress at a rapid rate.

Leadership and management of mathematics require improvement.

- You, and the recently appointed deputy headteacher who is also the subject leader, are ambitious for all pupils in the school. Together, you have a good knowledge and awareness of the school's strengths in mathematics teaching and what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement. The staff are working together well to secure improvement.
- Teaching is improving because staff at all levels have received effective professional training. Key to these development opportunities is the fact that it is tailored to their particular needs. The collaborative working with a local cluster of similar schools is helping staff to learn from the most effective practice that exists within the partnership.
- The local authority has provided effective support in building leadership capacity. One-to-one coaching, team-teaching and collaborative approaches between school and local authority staff have been particularly successful in securing improvements to teaching. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating.
- Improvements to systems to track pupils' progress have enabled you to determine which pupils are in danger of falling behind or who are not making sufficient progress. This information has been used effectively to determine where additional efforts are needed to ensure these pupils catch up.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics by ensuring that all staff:
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to work on their own and find things out for themselves
 - place greater emphasis on pupils' independent recording of their work.

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

Sarah Warboys
Additional Inspector