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Mr J Hayes
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hayes

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 with Kekshan Salaria HMI on 25 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; observation of four lessons (two jointly with you) and shorter visits, some with the subject leader, to eight other lessons and two intervention sessions.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children join the Nursery with mathematical skills that, overall, are below those typical for their age. In previous years, they have made steady progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that attainment at age 7 years has been below average, particularly in the proportion of more able pupils reaching Level 3. Your clear focus on all pupils making at least expected progress is helping to ensure that younger pupils, as well as older ones, now make good progress.
- The school has a track record of pupils' progress accelerating strongly in Year 6. In 2012, all of the pupils made the expected two levels of progress from their starting points at age 7, and many made more progress than this. Nearly all reached the expected Level 4 and half achieved the higher Level 5. Teacher assessments indicate similarly strong progress for the current cohort of Year 6 pupils, but from lower starting points overall.

- In 2012, pupils eligible for pupil premium attained as well as their peers, unlike the picture nationally, and closed the gap that was evident in 2011.
- All pupils have opportunities to solve problems, including some set in real-life contexts. They show a readiness 'have a go' and collaborate well, discussing their ideas and reasoning. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their achievement.
- Teachers follow the school's policy for developing pupils' calculation skills, which is accompanied by helpful guidance and workshops for parents. However, pupils do not always move on to the most efficient written calculation methods. Leaders have rightly identified that pupils would benefit from honing their mental calculation skills, a focus in next year's development plan.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers place a good emphasis on pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts, for instance through the use of base-10 resources to support addition of two-digit numbers. Particular strengths in the lesson planning include identified key questions and subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers use questioning well to check understanding and encourage pupils to extend and refine their reasoning. Teaching assistants provide effective one-to-one and small-group support for pupils who have specific needs.
- Staff are enthusiastic in their teaching of mathematics and reflective about their practice, keen to improve it further. Some teaching is outstanding. Relatively weaker aspects in a minority of lessons include teachers talking for too long, practical resources not being used to best effect and missed opportunities to promote mathematical learning outdoors in the nursery.
- Teachers' use of assessment supports learning well. The colour-coded marking is understood by the pupils who engage in dialogue about their work and the next steps in improving it. The use of 'yellow paper' is very helpful in encouraging pupils to make jottings and explore different ideas.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The mathematics curriculum is appropriately balanced with a good focus on developing understanding and opportunities for all pupils to solve problems. An exciting recent development is the use of iPads in the Reception classes. Greater use of computer software could be made by older pupils to support their exploration of topics such as number patterns, angle properties, reflection and rotation.
- The teachers work well together, sharing ideas on approaches to teaching topics and resources. Guidance is provided for staff in various ways, including through regular staff meetings that focus on developing aspects of mathematics teaching and assessment. The impact of these sessions is visible in teachers' day-to-day practice.
- A tradition at the school has been to stop discrete mathematics lessons for Year 6 pupils after the national Key Stage 2 tests, while continuing to provide small-group intervention for lower-attaining pupils. Pupils use mathematics in other subjects or during preparation for the annual

dramatic production. It is timely to review this tradition to ensure that pupils are as well prepared for secondary mathematics as possible.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The staff form a cohesive, committed team and share your ambition for the school to become outstanding. Your work to introduce the system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress has had a significant impact on ensuring raised expectations of pupils' achievement across the school.
- The subject leader, a Mathematics Specialist Teacher, is held in high regard by her colleagues who praise the high quality of training sessions she leads and the support she provides in developing teaching approaches and use of new resources. Work this year on teachers' marking and on the learning environment has paid good dividends. Observations conducted jointly with the subject leader showed her ability to pinpoint, with good attention to mathematical detail, strengths and areas for development.
- Monitoring by leaders includes a mix of lesson observation, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work. However, the outcomes are not used systematically to improve further the quality of teaching and learning. The action plan is not as detailed as it could be to support the incremental steps to securing your aim of outstanding provision. However, the team of staff and leaders shows the capacity to achieve this, particularly if planned actions and initiatives are linked closely to rigorous, developmental monitoring and professional development in mathematics.
- You spoke positively of governors' interest in the school's work in mathematics; in particular, the involvement of the numeracy governor who, for example, attended a recent staff training session.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the quality of mathematics provision to outstanding by:
 - establishing a system of regular monitoring that pays close attention to mathematical detail, using the outcomes to aid improvement through sharing good practice and tackling any weaker or inconsistent aspects
 - ensuring that pupils progress to efficient mental and written calculation strategies
 - reviewing provision for Year 6 pupils to ensure that they are best placed for transition to learning secondary mathematics.

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

Jane Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector