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Ms P Walker
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Walker

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 27 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 senior staff, a group of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; a brief visit to a parents' workshop; observation of four sessions and brief visits to other lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- The mathematical knowledge of the majority of children on entry to the Nursery is more typical of children at least a year younger. In particular, poor speech is a key barrier to learning for many. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in numbers and shape, space and measures.
- In past years, pupils have made steady progress through Key Stage 1 so that attainment at age seven years has been below average, particularly in the proportion of more able pupils reaching Level 3. Focused teaching has accelerated pupils' progress. The school's data for current pupils in Key Stage 1 indicate a much improved picture, particularly at the higher level.
- In 2012, the large majority of pupils made the expected two levels of progress from their starting points at age seven to the end of Key Stage 2.

Teacher assessments indicate similarly strong progress for the current cohort of Year 6 pupils.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Mathematics skills are taught effectively in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because learning is planned systematically and adapted well according to what individual children need. Children's learning and development are observed closely and carefully. Staff are quick to identify any extra help that children require and adjustments are made promptly.
- Good and outstanding lessons were observed during this visit. The best teaching ensured planning sequenced learning carefully. Mostly it focused on developing conceptual understanding and drawing on interesting activities that ensured the entire class was involved. Pupils were also given opportunities to work in pairs or groups to discuss mathematics, and were presented with appropriately challenging and varied work. Relatively weaker aspects of some of the teaching included too much talk by the teacher, which constrained the rate at which the learning progressed.
- A distinctly strong feature of the school is the quality of the work of the teaching assistants. They intervene and support pupils sensitively and make a strong contribution to their learning across the school. This is especially the case when the teachers give teaching assistants detailed plans to help them ask their group of pupils the right questions and steer their learning successfully; for example, ensuring the accurate use of mathematical terms.
- The introduction of 'maths meetings' at the beginning of all mathematics lessons is having a very positive impact in engaging and motivating pupils. It is also ensuring that all pupils experience problem solving and learning through practical activities.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The schemes of work ensure coverage of the curriculum and include guidance on approaches and activities that promote conceptual understanding. Such guidance is valuable for all teachers but particularly for staff who are less experienced or not mathematics specialists.
- Pupils' workbooks showed good coverage of basic number skills, word problems and practical investigations. Year 5 pupils discussed their enjoyment of 'maths meetings' at the beginning of their mathematics lessons, and homework that included the learning of multiplication tables and reward of 'Times tables Badges'.
- Senior leaders meet teachers regularly to discuss individual pupils' progress. The range of support provided meets pupils' needs well.
- The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning mathematics is well developed. To further extend this provision, senior leaders are in the process of purchasing iPads for use throughout the school.

- All pupils have some opportunities to investigate and to use and apply their mathematics as an integral part of their learning in mathematics.

Leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- The increased emphasis on pupils using and applying mathematical knowledge is having a very positive impact on pupils' and parents' enthusiasm for the subject. The impact of the action plan for mathematics is evident in the raised profile of mathematics, as seen in the vibrant and challenging displays in corridors, and in the increasing attendance of parents and their children at the 'Ocean maths' workshops.
- Mathematical themed weeks during the year focus on aspects of mathematics, such as data handling, and problem solving, and help to foster pupils' understanding and enjoyment of the subject. For example, the mathematical focus of Year 6 work-experience week helped to increase pupils' awareness of the use of mathematics in everyday life.
- The school collects a lot of data on each pupil's attainment. This information is used effectively in planning lessons and in setting individual pupils' targets. In discussion with me, pupils indicated that they are involved in setting and reviewing their challenging targets. The attention to how well each pupil makes progress and the additional dedicated target-work lessons are strong factors in pupils' good achievement.
- The subject leader for mathematics has a well-informed overview of pupils' achievement, curriculum coverage and quality of provision. Her skills in checking how well pupils are learning, analysing what is working well, and what is not, and summarising their findings are equally strongly developed as those of the senior leaders.
- Senior leaders undertake a wide range of activities to check on the school's provision, including looking at pupils' books and observing lessons frequently. However, the skills and involvement of pupils in critically assessing their learning are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement in mathematics further by empowering pupils to think critically so that they are able to articulate their thinking and talk about their learning.

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

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector