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Mr P Rhatigan
Principal
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Dear Mr Rhatigan

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 14 October 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 you, the senior vice principal, the mathematics leader and three pupils from Year 6; review of performance data from 2012/13 and documents related to mathematics; joint scrutiny with the mathematics team of work from a sample of pupils in Years 1, 3 and 5, and from several Year 6 pupils who left in July; a learning walk with the mathematics leader; observation with you of part of three lessons and visits to support sessions for groups of pupils.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- From often a low start in the Reception year, pupils achieve well over time because of a consistent, developmental approach to mathematics. The youngest children gain a good practical grounding indoors and out in number, shape, space and measures. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils develop a firm knowledge of place value, number bonds, multiplication tables and calculation strategies.
- Standards have risen. As in 2012, nearly all Year 6 pupils in 2013 gained the level expected for their age having made at least the progress expected nationally at Key Stage 2. One third made even better progress; 40% have moved into secondary school working at levels a year or more ahead. The boys did particularly well in 2013. In Year 2, the girls outshone

the boys. 85% of Year 2 pupils gained at least Level 2B, a higher proportion than seen nationally in 2012.

- Generally, throughout the school, pupils made the progress expected. Most of those eligible for pupil premium funding did really well. The school accepts that there is headroom for pupils, especially the most able, to do even better.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics; the 'Maths Champ' was proud to wear her mathematics tie and, during a wet playtime, pupils quizzed each other on multiplication facts. In lessons, pupils worked conscientiously on their own, with partners and in teams, handled equipment sensibly, shared their thinking and took care to set out their work neatly. Year 6 pupils talked enthusiastically about what they needed to do to meet their targets.
- A growing strength is pupils' confidence in using and applying their mathematical knowledge, such as working out the amount of materials needed and the costs to turf the quadrangle. Pupils learn to estimate and check their answers.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- A common commitment to enabling pupils to do their best is evident in the range and quality of pupils' work in books, the use of 'mathematics walls' with current strategies and key vocabulary, and the recently improved content of teachers' marking. Just occasionally, the suggested next steps are too big a leap or are not directly linked to the actual planned content.
- Strengths in the teaching seen included detailed planning with tasks and resources matched to the abilities and needs of differing groups. Teachers and support assistants were confident and knowledgeable; they worked well together, questioning and encouraging pupils, picking up on their concerns as well as recognising publicly when pupils had been successful.
- Occasionally, adults were too quick to instruct rather than draw out pupils' ideas and explanations. Chances were also missed to link the review of what pupils had done more closely to the success criteria for the lesson.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The mathematics curriculum has breadth and depth with a strengthening balance of well thought-out challenges for pupils to use and apply what they learn in mathematics lessons. The emphasis on practical experiences and use of resources, such as single unit cubes and ten-sticks, promote conceptual understanding and a smooth move into mental calculations.
- Although some mathematics is integral to work in other subjects, the content has not been rigorously planned to show how it augments learning and/or gives a fair coverage of mathematical aspects.
- The setting of pupils at Key Stage 2 for mathematics lessons is supplemented effectively by timely support sessions for those pupils who need additional help to secure their understanding. Entries in the planning link books, completed by teachers and teaching assistants after lessons, provide an informed picture of who needs help and why. Similar sessions

could potentially increase the challenge for the most able. You have made good use of external specialist guidance in mathematics to support pupils with particular needs, including dyscalculia.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Your personal enthusiasm for, and expertise in, mathematics ensure the mathematics team is well supported and the subject has a high profile in the school. The 'Maths Passport', recording a pupil's journey in acquiring basic number facts, underlines the shared vision of each pupil becoming proficient in number. Recent developments in teaching and curricular changes have led to several outstanding aspects within the provision.
- The mathematics leader has worked with staff to heighten their awareness of how to develop pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics. Professional development sessions, along with ideas from published materials, have prompted interesting investigations with an increased use of photographs to record pupils' responses and progress. Staff are already incorporating aspects of the revised National Curriculum in mathematics.
- You hold teachers accountable for their pupils' progress. The findings from a range of monitoring activities give a clear picture of on-going work to ensure consistency of practice and improvement in provision. To tighten improvement planning, there is scope to drill down deeper to identify exactly where pupils may be insecure, and how accurately teachers are identifying the next step in an individual pupil's learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the most able pupils in all year groups are suitably challenged and given chances to widen their knowledge and skills
- specifying the intended outcomes for pupils to result from the improvement action planned
- identifying opportunities within other subjects to develop, apply and use specific mathematical knowledge and skills
- ensuring that the 'next step' in teachers' marking is appropriate
- encouraging pupils to take the lead even more in explaining mathematical processes and in justifying their reasoning.

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.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Oyen
Her Majesty's Inspector