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Ms K Constant  
Headteacher  
St Wilfrid's CofE Aided Primary School  
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Dear Ms Constant

### **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 Jane Jones, Her Majesty's Inspector, on 13 January 2014 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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three part lessons and shorter visits to eight other lessons to look at teaching and learning in mathematics across the school.

### **The overall effectiveness of mathematics is inadequate.**

#### **Achievement in mathematics is inadequate.**

- The relatively positive picture painted by the 2013 results of national tests for Year 6 pupils is not reflected in the rest of the school. Too many pupils fail to make the progress of which they are capable and their attainment has slipped below the levels expected for their age.
- The achievement of pupils in Key Stage 1 has declined over the last three years to levels that are significantly below those expected, given their starting points.
- Evidence from pupils' work shows that their progress is uneven across the school and, over time, this has resulted in a declining trend in progress. Information from the school's tracking of pupils' progress shows that this is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and those

supported by the pupil premium. Gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding stem from weaknesses in teaching approaches.

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. From the views they expressed to inspectors and the comments they write in their books, it is clear that they are keen to learn and many would like more challenging work. Their explanations of the mathematics they have learned indicate that their understanding of mathematical ideas is insecure.

### **Teaching in mathematics is inadequate.**

- Too much teaching requires improvement or is inadequate, which restricts pupils' progress in lessons and over time. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low. Because not enough of the teaching is good, current pupils are not able to catch up quickly from their previous underperformance.
- Weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and skills in assessment, together with a lack of effective training, have resulted in teachers lacking confidence in teaching mathematics. Teaching approaches do not develop pupils' mathematical reasoning and conceptual understanding. This results in gaps in learning and insecurities in understanding of key mathematical concepts which are not picked up and addressed by teachers.
- The role of additional adults makes too little contribution to pupils' progress. Too often, support from adults focuses on prompting pupils to achieve the correct answer rather than on developing pupils' understanding. Similarly, in the Early Year Foundation Stage, opportunities are missed to extend and promote children's mathematical understanding through their play and the learning they initiate for themselves.

### **The curriculum in mathematics is inadequate.**

- The organisation of the curriculum and the compartmentalisation of different, yet related, aspects has resulted in sequences of learning that do not build pupils' understanding deeply enough, particularly of the number system and relationships between mathematical concepts. In part, this stems from weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge.
- The scheme of work lacks guidance for teachers on suitable teaching approaches and on securing progression lesson by lesson and over time in strands of mathematics. Problem solving and using and applying mathematics are underemphasised.

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

- You are clear about the challenges the school faces and notwithstanding issues with staffing, you are clear there can be no excuses for pupils' underachievement. Having introduced improved systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and tracking pupils' progress, you have identified where improvement is required but actions taken so far have yet to show any significant impact on the quality of teaching and progress of pupils.

- The role of the subject leader is underdeveloped. You explained that this is the case across subjects in the school. Leaders have received little training for their subject-leadership role and acknowledged the need to build greater capacity to drive improvement rapidly.
- The action plan for mathematics identifies some key priorities but does not focus sufficiently on the intended impact of actions. Monitoring activities, such as scrutiny of pupils' work, lack precise attention to the mathematical detail necessary to have a significant impact on improving teaching and learning. While new systems to check regularly on pupils' progress have been established and have begun to reveal the extent of the challenge the school faces, further work is required to develop leaders' understanding and use of data to monitor progress and drive improvement.
- Provision for teachers' professional development in mathematics has been limited. Few teachers have received any training to develop their subject knowledge.

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

- raising expectations of what pupils should achieve and the progress they can make in lessons and over time
- improving the quality of teaching by:
  - increasing teachers' subject knowledge so they plan sequences of lessons which deepen pupils' understanding and build carefully on their prior learning
  - providing guidance on approaches that develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics
  - developing the accuracy and effective use of assessment to accelerate the progress of pupils
- training leaders to drive improvement in mathematics by increasing the rigour and mathematical focus of monitoring activities and providing pertinent subject-specific feedback to teachers.

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

**Adrian Guy**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**