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Mrs S Elliot
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Elliot

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 30 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: interviews with staff, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Typically, attainment in mathematics in the Year 2 national tests and assessments has been average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was similar to the national picture in the last two years.
- Pupils start Year 3 well drilled in basic number facts. Lessons deepen their ability to use these facts in a range of ways, through problem solving, identifying mistakes in each other's work, and by investigating how our number system works. Pupils' mathematical development is good overall throughout the Key Stage 2 years; pupils make good progress.
- Across the school, pupils respond well to the motivating teaching. They grasp the concepts they are learning and are deepening their understanding of the relationships between the four number operations.
- Because pupils are taught to use mathematical language effectively, they are able to express their thinking and strategies for problem solving. Pupils

of low ability are less reliant on adults to choose the operations required to solve problems involving the four number operations.

- Pupils who have learning difficulties are well supported through additional help in small groups. This work is connected with the topics being covered in pupils' main lessons and helps them overcome any gaps in their knowledge and gain more confidence.
- More able pupils in Year 5 are making excellent progress because the work encourages a deeper thinking and builds rapidly on their secure skills. As one pupil commented 'things are clicking into place'. They are enthusiastic, love mathematics lessons, and persevere keenly with demanding work.
- Plenty of daily and varied mental arithmetic practice, often at impressive speed, is contributing to good progress in recalling facts quickly and also engenders a love for number. The focus on working together as a class or in small teams when reciting number facts has reduced the competitive element that has hindered some middle-ability pupils in the past.
- A few pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 have yet to secure their understanding of how the number system works. This is holding up their progress.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teaching is good. It ensures pupils are making good progress and developing as confident and enthusiastic mathematicians. The very best teaching has at its heart the idea that, with the right match of work, pupils will explore and think for themselves. So it was in a mixed Year 4/5 class, where pupils set up their own ways to partition a shape and express the areas as percentages, fractions and decimals of the original shape.
- Teachers increase challenge appropriately, not just by giving pupils harder computations but by presenting problems from different perspectives. In most lessons, teachers use questions to judge how well pupils are learning asking, for example, 'I wonder what would happen if I divided this by a hundred? What would that give me?' Such questions invariably put the onus back on to pupils to think more and challenge themselves.
- Teachers are effective at anticipating misunderstanding. In one lesson, pupils quickly spotted the hidden mistakes in the teacher's use of well-known methods for division. The examples had different levels of difficulty so that all pupils could access the challenge and deepen their thinking.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The curriculum is developing well. Lesson planning is guided by a blend of the new National Curriculum requirements alongside a range of exciting and well-resourced experiences that bring mathematics to life.
- Interventions to make up lost ground are based on a broad set of assessments and are well targeted for individuals and groups. Some small-group sessions are not sufficiently small for all the pupils to engage with learning or get the teacher's attention at the right moment.

- The expectation that pupils will get on and work well together strengthens pupils' willingness to take risks and explore mathematical ideas and reasoning. This supports their personal development skills.
- The organisation of the practical and investigative work is spot on. Where pupils need to manipulate numbers, such as in a Year 2 exercise to balance luggage loads in the holds of four identical planes, the provision of cards to help the pupils to model their addition calculations was of great benefit. A bonus was that the pupils went on to use the cards and explore other ways of grouping and arranging the loads, which took the exercise well beyond its original intention. In this way, the curriculum really engages and fires the pupils' imagination.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The highly skilled mathematics subject teacher has added capacity to the senior team. She has an excellent knowledge of recently published reports from Ofsted and other professional bodies and has distilled their findings for the staff.
- School leaders' approach to staff development and training is very effective. 'Book looks' and checks on lesson plans challenge teachers to improve their lessons to meet all the pupils' needs. Staff no longer feel that they are going to be exposed if they express anxiety about the effectiveness of their teaching.
- A small but knowledgeable team have oversight of all aspects of developments in mathematics in the school. This usefully includes representatives from the governing body who make it their job to check that their expenditure on resources is having an impact. However, their latest report lacks a clear evaluation of which aspects of the mathematics intervention programme is having a positive impact.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- redoubling efforts to secure a good working understanding of our number system for those few pupils who are having trouble with this, by reviewing the size and structure of the intervention groups
- accounting more closely for the pupil premium spending on mathematics interventions and the impact they are having on pupils' progress.

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

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector