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Mrs A Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

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 17 March 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 and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of four lessons and brief visits to other lessons and additional activities.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 are usually above average. In 2013, they declined to average. The school's assessment information shows that, currently, pupils in Key Stage 2 in each year are well placed to achieve standards that are above average. In Years 5 and 6, the proportion of more-able pupils is larger than is typical nationally with a group of Year 6 pupils working within the higher Level 6.
- Most children enter the Reception class with mathematics skills that are typical for their age. Progress is good in mathematics throughout the school. Most pupils leave Year 6 having developed fluency when handling numbers and the ability to solve problems systematically. For example, when I spoke to a group of Year 5 pupils of different abilities, they all

demonstrated that they could calculate mentally the percentage, fraction and decimal equivalence of numbers and apply them to word problems.

- The attitude to mathematics exhibited by pupils is good. The school has successfully fostered pupils' ability to persevere when solving difficult problems. In the past, it is reported that pupils were too ready to give in when encountering difficulties. This is certainly not the case now.
- Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and it is therefore not appropriate to comment on their attainment. Generally, they make equal or better progress when compared to other pupils.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Pupils benefit from good teaching throughout the school. Teachers plan work that is pitched correctly for most pupils so that they build a good understanding of mathematical ideas and proficiency with numbers, shapes and measures. Teachers check carefully the work that pupils are completing so that they overcome misconceptions.
- Marking and the use of individual targets for pupils are very effective. Teachers and leaders have thought carefully about how mathematics should be marked and how best to involve pupils in the next steps they need to take to develop their skills and understanding. Time is set aside in each lesson for pupils to review their work which they do conscientiously. The pupils spoken to understand how well they are doing and what it is they have to be able to achieve to progress to the next level.
- One reason why teaching is not outstanding is that the first parts of lessons are not as well planned as the rest to meet the needs of pupils. Even though groups of pupils will be embarking on different work during their lessons they tend to listen to the same introduction. Sometimes this is not appropriate because the introduction is too hard for some, and for others covers ground that they already understand.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Following the decline in standards last year, the school concentrated very successfully on strengthening aspects of the curriculum to better support teaching and learning. Division, symmetry and fractions were identified as weaker aspects of teaching and learning and leaders provided staff with training and guidance. Recent assessments show that pupils' progress in these aspects is much more rapid.
- Groups of pupils, such as the more able and those who are lower attaining, receive extra teaching from well-trained practitioners during the school day. Consequently, these groups make rapid progress.
- Staff understand the importance of practical apparatus to help pupils learn and promote its use effectively. Children in the Reception class were able to add numbers to 10 confidently without counting because they were helped by number apparatus.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- You, supported effectively by the deputy headteacher and mathematics coordinator, have good capacity to improve mathematics further. This was demonstrated this academic year when together you took the necessary steps to strengthen teaching and learning so that pupils' progress accelerated. Staff were given appropriate training, worked in partnership with other schools in the Pontefract Academies Trust to share good practice, and were allocated a target for improving mathematics teaching and learning as a part of their performance management.
- Checks on lessons are regular and thorough. However, the records leaders keep when making these checks are generic rather than mathematics specific. This means that they are helpful in ensuring that teachers conform to all expectations, but are not specifically focussed on aspects of mathematics teaching. For example, while the teaching of problem solving is good, it is not outstanding because leaders do not identify specifically how teachers could make the teaching of problem solving more sophisticated. Such as by promoting more open ended or complex investigations.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by tailoring the introductions to lessons for all groups so that they are learning from the start of the lesson
- making the teaching of problem solving outstanding by focussing more sharply, when observing lessons, on how to advise teachers on what they need to do to make their teaching more sophisticated.

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

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector