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Mr A Bastable
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bastable

Ofsted 2014–15 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 June 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 observations of two part lessons, conducted jointly with you.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is requires improvement.

Achievement in mathematics requires improvement.

- From starting points that are, for most pupils, above those typical for their age, pupils make at least expected progress and their attainment by the end of their time at the school is above average levels. However, unevenness in pupils' progress in some year groups means not all are progressing as well as they could. This stems from work that is not matched accurately enough to pupils' different abilities.
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers and sometimes exceed them. This is because teachers and leaders are adamant that having special educational needs is not a barrier to achievement. The tiny proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium also achieve well.
- Pupils are interested in mathematics. They work very well in pairs when given tasks that enable them to explore mathematical challenges. However, too often the work they are given does not place enough emphasis on mathematical reasoning or give enough opportunities to use and apply what pupils have been

taught. Consequently, they are not challenged to think deeply enough and the most able pupils are not stretched sufficiently.

- Pupils are perceptive about their learning and say they would rather have more problem solving and investigative activities rather than long lists of calculations.

Teaching in mathematics requires improvement.

- Teachers explain mathematical methods and activities carefully so that pupils can carry out the tasks they are set. However, the extent to which teachers plan for and develop pupils' mathematical reasoning, including though open-ended and investigative work, requires improvement. For example, a Year 5 pupil struggled to explain place value of digits in decimal numbers, a misconception that was also evident in his work. By contrast, he could explain how the terms in Fibonacci sequence progressed from the sum of the two previous terms. This was because he had carried out an investigation into number sequences that had enabled him to think deeply about numbers, patterns and relationships between them.
- Teachers are caring and supportive and leaders are aware that pupils' progress in lessons is often impeded by over-helpful adults who focus their support on completing the activity or getting to the answers quickly rather than ensuring that pupils understand fully the concepts so that they can work out answers for themselves.
- Reception children were enthusiastic about a weighing activity to make bird cakes. However, the adult's narrow focus on completing the task meant that opportunities were not exploited to allow children explore the mathematical concepts more fully and be curious about mathematical ideas in their play.
- Although teachers mark pupils' work regularly, not all of their comments spot misconceptions or help pupils to make better progress. Moreover, pupils do not consistently respond to comments when asked, so that chances to make better progress and check understanding are missed.

The curriculum in mathematics requires improvement.

- The school is reviewing its mathematics curriculum in preparation for the introduction of the new National Curriculum in September. Although the current framework covers the curriculum appropriately, insufficient guidance is provided for teachers on approaches to teaching that secure pupils' deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Mathematical themes are included in other subjects, for example, a project on 'If the world was a village...' provided opportunities to collect and display data about the world's population, different religions and the amount of hunger in the world. However, the mathematics involved is not clearly specified or linked to mathematics curriculum planning. As a result, sequences of learning do not build pupils' understanding systematically.

Leadership and management of mathematics require improvement.

- Together with your mathematics leader, you are open and honest about the strengths and areas for improvement required in mathematics. You are aware of the need to develop pupils' ability to think more deeply for themselves and to

ensure greater consistency in the way calculations are taught. In addition, our scrutiny of pupils' work showed that better guidance is needed on approaches to teaching to ensure that sequences of lessons build progressively on pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics.

- The school's improvement plan for mathematics focuses on implementing the new National Curriculum in September and developing assessment to identify gaps in pupils' learning. However, it does not pinpoint precisely the developments needed within the mathematics curriculum and in teaching approaches.
- The checking of pupils' books, observations of teaching and other monitoring activities give overviews and provide some helpful general points for improvement. However, more incisive mathematical feedback is required to enable teachers to know exactly how to improve their teaching in mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of teaching by:
 - strengthening teachers' planning for progression across sequences of lessons in key strands of mathematics
 - increasing the emphasis on problem-solving and investigation
 - placing a sharper focus on developing pupils' mathematical understanding and reasoning skills
 - ensuring teachers' marking and feedback consistently identify and address misconceptions, coupled with opportunities for pupils to respond
- providing training and guidance for staff on:
 - teaching approaches that promote conceptual understanding and develop mathematical reasoning
 - securing progression in key strands of mathematics across the school
- strengthening subject leadership in mathematics by:
 - sharpening the action plan for mathematics to include foci on progression and the development of pupils' conceptual understanding, investigative skills and mathematical reasoning
 - ensuring that the school's planning documents for the new National Curriculum include clear links between aspects of mathematics and appropriate guidance for teachers
 - increasing the focus on mathematical detail in monitoring activities and 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