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Mr R Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

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 3 July 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 subject improvement plans, monitoring and training records; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is outstanding.

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding.

- Standards in the national assessments at Key Stages 1 and 2 have been consistently above average for the last four years. In 2013, the proportion of year 6 pupils achieving Level 4 and Level 5 was well above the national average. In 2014 these high standards have been maintained with an increased proportion of pupils achieving Level 6.
- Achievement is outstanding because pupils are extremely confident and have very positive attitudes towards mathematics, responding to teaching with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Pupils love analysing number sequences and patterns, learning new calculation methods, and acquiring new investigative skills.
- This confidence starts early in the Reception class. Expert organisation of the learning environment allows children to explore their ideas, for example when calculating to find number pairs making 10 or 20. Children

record these number sentences accurately using whiteboards for example to show their answers to the number of pirates who have fallen off the ship, as part of their sea theme.

- Pupils' progress in all year groups is rapid for three main reasons. First, frequent, interesting activities which challenge pupils to extend their thinking. Second, high quality mathematic teaching and targeted support pupils receive. Third, careful checks on teaching by senior leaders.

Teaching in mathematics is outstanding.

- The teaching of mathematics is very well structured. Many opportunities in lessons help pupils to apply their well-developed conceptual understanding to solve challenging problems systematically. Teachers know when it is effective to use instruction in lessons to teach knowledge, in Year 5 for example, to demonstrate how to calculate with negative numbers.
- Teachers use their detailed understanding of how pupils learn mathematics to adapt their planning between lessons. Adults use effective questioning cleverly during lessons to re-shape and guide activities. This results in pupils being challenged throughout lessons, such as in Year 1/2 to solve real-life money problems in the Fruit Shop or the Great Pet Sale.
- Teachers' marking in books and oral feedback accelerates pupils' achievement rapidly. Teachers allow time for pupils to respond to marking, resulting in a mature approach to learning and pupils' ability to spot a misconception quickly in the work of their peers. Target cards are successful in raising even further pupils' aspirations and expectations of what at they can, and do, achieve even further. Pupils have an extremely well developed notion of their next steps in learning.
- Staff strive successfully to achieve even better practice by constantly trying to fine tune their teaching. For instance, teachers have refined challenging activities, taken from the Key Stage 3 mathematics curriculum, to meet the needs of the most able pupils exceptionally well.

The curriculum in mathematics is outstanding.

- The strong, structured and hierarchical approach on mastering the basic skills develops pupils' conceptual understanding very well and means that no pupil leaves the school with gaps in their mathematical knowledge. Once into the 'Finishing School' of the Years 5/6 class, pupils apply their knowledge to solve complex and challenging problems well.
- Teachers use a structured scheme only as a starting point for the topics being covered. Activities are then adapted well to extend and support pupils' different mathematical needs. Very occasionally, calculation work for more able pupils in Years 3/4 lacks the variety needed to make them think hard about every operation.
- Teachers make good use in the curriculum of informal links to other subjects. For example, older pupils research and investigate which mobile phone tariff and offer provides them with the best value for money. Such opportunities provide pupils with a very good understanding of using

mathematics in everyday life. The school recognises that some of these informal links could be made into more formal plans.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to enhance pupils' learning. On-line programmes, used in lessons and at home, supplement and reinforce taught aspects well. Teachers use the information the programmes provide to analyse pupils' responses and plan carefully for their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- Your outstanding leadership qualities are fundamental to the maintenance of high quality mathematics in the school. Your informed actions are helping others improve, both adults and pupils, and enable all to thrive in a culture of high expectations. The mathematics leaders support you very well. The school's plans for the development of mathematics are brought to life by the way they are using the most recent guidance to conduct their work.
- All staff are involved in the broad range of insightful monitoring activities. These provide a high degree of analysis from which to pin-point improvements. The accuracy and impact of these systems is evident in the quality of teaching and pupils' mathematical work seen on inspection.
- Developmental feedback by senior leaders builds exceptionally well on previous targets and is helping all staff to develop their mathematics teaching.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring written questions for more able pupils in Years 3/4 are varied, make pupils think hard and require them to apply their calculation skills
- using the opportunities presented by the new National Curriculum to formalise links in mathematics to other subjects.

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

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector