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Ms A Aze
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Aze

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 26 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 you, the mathematics subject leader, and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics requires improvement.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Typically, attainment in mathematics in the Year 2 national tests and assessments has been slightly below average. The trend is improving and this year almost all pupils have secured a good grounding in basic mathematical computation ready to start Year 3. This is the result of using the information from the Early Years Foundation Stage assessments to plan more precisely the work for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils' mathematical development is good overall throughout the Key Stage 2 years; pupils make good progress. In the past, pupils started Year 3 with wide variance in their understanding of number and recall of basic number facts. The gaps close quickly because lessons focus pupils on learning to use calculation strategies accurately and in a range of ways.
- Progress is now more even between ability groups, including those in receipt of the pupil premium funding. Work is well matched to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils, because their skills are understood by

staff. 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 Years 5 and 6 are making good progress because the work encourages deeper thinking and builds rapidly on their secure skills. Last year, the more able pupils all reached the higher Level 5 with an above average proportion exceeding this and attaining Level 6.
- Across the school, pupils respond well to the encouraging teaching. Pupils are enthusiastic, enjoy mathematics lessons, and persevere keenly with demanding work.
- Because pupils are taught to use mathematical language effectively, they are able to express their thinking and strategies for problem solving. Low-attaining pupils are confident to choose the operations required to solve problems involving the four number operations.
- The increased emphasis on daily mental arithmetic has proved effective. Pupils are getting quicker at doing simple mental calculations accurately and this streamlines their longer calculations.

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.
- Teachers increase challenge appropriately. In lessons, teachers use questions to judge how well pupils are learning, for example, 'I wonder what would happen if I divided the number by four rather than multiplied? What would that give me?' Such questions invariably put the onus back on to pupils to think more and test for themselves.
- Lessons observed and the scrutiny of pupils' work show signs that teachers are increasingly using investigations as a way to get pupils to think more deeply. Some teachers are more skilled than others at exploring the mathematical thinking behind pupils' work and using this, for example, to record generalisations. Not all teachers check pupils' thinking and encourage them to reason about the mathematics they are learning.
- You are steadily building up a culture in lessons in which mathematics and mathematical thinking are discussed. Currently, however, this discourse is of variable quality and, consequently, some pupils' conceptual understanding is not developed securely in all lessons.
- Teaching assistants are well informed and help pupils get the most out of the whole-class teaching.

The curriculum in mathematics requires improvement.

- You have strengthened the curriculum to ensure it emphasises development of effective calculation strategies. Teachers use the guidance

to tackle pupils' misunderstandings effectively and secure their understanding of the relationships between the four number operations.

- The scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books shows that work on shape, space and measures builds systematically on pupils' skills and knowledge. The breadth and depth of this work is often unduly restrained by splitting the learning into small pieces.
- The scheme of work has not been adapted to show clearly how problem solving and investigations can support the development of pupils' conceptual understanding. The chance to use and strengthen mathematics skills in other subjects is sporadic.
- Activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not always assist them to strengthen and develop their mathematical thinking.

Leadership and management of mathematics are requiring improvement.

- Your accurate evaluation of the school's mathematics provision has led to significantly strengthened assessment and tracking systems. You have responded speedily to rectify pupils' weak understanding of place value.
- The aspirations of more able mathematicians have been raised across the school through setting clear expectations of these pupils' progress. The regular tracking of those entitled to the pupil premium funding and rapid response to any underachievement has been very effective.
- The priorities for developing the curriculum are identified but subsequent work has lacked urgency. The action plan lacks detail, and the dates for completing elements of the plan are vague.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- implementing a strengthened action plan to speed up development
- providing more guidance for all teachers on how to incorporate problem solving and investigational activities into their lessons and activities
- developing teachers' expertise in using discussion to support pupils' conceptual understanding in all areas of the mathematics curriculum.

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