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Mrs S Thompson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Thompson

### **Ofsted 2014–15 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 22 and 23 October 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 the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and visits to 17 lessons.

### **The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.**

#### **Leadership and management of mathematics are good.**

- The head of faculty is a very effective communicator and is moving mathematics forward at a lively pace. The teachers, all of whom are subject specialists, have a complementary set of skills and experience. Ideas and resources are shared freely and teachers are encouraged to try out new approaches and to observe each other.
- The senior leadership team and governors support mathematics very well. They make every effort to ensure that vacancies are filled by qualified subject specialists and that teachers already in the department are supported well and retained. Students' performance and the quality of provision are monitored closely at all levels of leadership. The departmental development plan is ambitious and sharp.

- A wide range of professional development includes training for experienced teachers wanting to take on new responsibilities and support for those new to the profession. A programme of support for teachers experiencing difficulties has proved very successful. Performance management is robust and senior leaders and governors will take decisive action where necessary.

### **The curriculum in mathematics is good.**

- All teachers and leaders are fully aware of national changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and have introduced the new curriculum in Year 9. The team is keeping abreast of the latest information available in order to choose the course and style of examination that suits their students.
- The curriculum is well designed to match students' needs. Further mathematics qualifications are used well to ensure that the most able Year 11 students continue to find mathematics challenging. A-level mathematics will be offered at the academy from September 2015 and plans are well underway.
- The curriculum is very responsive. For example, changes have been made this year to meet the needs of an increased number of very low attaining students in Year 7 by using the expertise of primary teachers from the multi-academy trust.
- Extra support for students outside of lessons is good. Lunchtime access to online learning packages is used well. In addition, students can get advice from the most able mathematicians in Year 10 and 11 who act as mentors. Other lunchtime sessions, run by teachers, offer students individual support with specific problems.

### **Teaching in mathematics is good.**

- The academy's assessment that teaching is good is accurate and was reflected in the teaching seen in lessons. Examples of outstanding practice were also seen. The mathematics teaching assistant is an integral member of the team and gives high quality support in lessons.
- Teachers plan well and build skills and knowledge very cleverly in order to develop understanding. They check learning effectively and adapt plans for lessons accordingly. A wide range of resources and teaching approaches are used to engage and motivate students and foster enjoyment.
- Teachers are adept at turning questions round, asking probing follow-up questions and setting challenging problems in order to make students really think about the concepts.
- The quality of written feedback from teachers is good but students are not systematically doing corrections and so opportunities to consolidate learning are lost.

## **Achievement in mathematics is good.**

- The grade A\* to C pass rate in GCSE mathematics is high and the proportion of students making expected progress during their time in the academy is well above average. Disadvantaged students are not performing as well others but last year's data show they are beginning to catch up. The department has refined its strategies for supporting disadvantaged students and is monitoring the effectiveness closely.
- In lessons, students have the confidence to offer possible solutions to difficult questions. They help each other with any misconceptions and relish the opportunity to attempt unusual questions and challenges. They are encouraged from the start to look for patterns and test out ideas. The most able students are challenged well in lessons and get a real boost when they succeed at hard questions taken from old examination papers.
- The work in students' books shows that they are making good progress. Students of all ages and abilities use subject terminology accurately in lessons but do not take the same care with the spelling of mathematical terms in written work.

## **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring that students make maximum use of the detailed written feedback given in their books
- increasing the amount of outstanding teaching.

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

**Jan Bennett**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**