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Mr D Allsop
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Allsop

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 10 and 11 November 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and visits to lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is outstanding.

Leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- Over the last few years the head of department and his team have been relentless in their pursuit of excellence. With the support of the senior team they have raised achievement to the highest level and made the department one of the strongest in the school.
- The department's performance is very closely monitored by both senior leaders and the mathematics team. All have a very accurate view of the quality of provision and are constantly looking at ways to improve. Performance management is robust.
- The department has a wealth of experience, an excellent team spirit and a wide range of valuable skills. There is much informal sharing of ideas, resources and expertise both within the department and with former colleagues and ex-students working in the local area. The department is

very stable and has no difficulty attracting high-quality applicants when vacancies arise.

- Professional development and training are focused on changes to the curriculum but teachers are also encouraged to attend courses to develop their own practice. For example, one teacher is on an outstanding teachers' programme and another is studying Open University mathematics modules. They share their learning with colleagues and all are benefiting.

The curriculum in mathematics is outstanding.

- The curriculum is responsive, adaptable and very closely tailored to the needs of students. Schemes of work have in-built flexibility allowing teachers to use their professional judgement and expertise. Regular tests ensure that topics are completed by a fixed date ensuring that any resulting movement between sets causes minimal disruption to learning.
- The new Key Stage 3 curriculum has been successfully introduced supported by a well-planned scheme of work giving very good guidance and useful links to resources. The team continues to develop further resources, especially for new topics such as surds, and is working on plans for the new GCSEs.
- Excellent subject support is available. Students' progress is tracked very closely and interventions are put in place quickly. They include one-to-one support, small-group work and attendance at a weekly mathematics club. Students in receipt of support say that it accelerates their learning, improves understanding and gives them confidence in their own ability to tackle mathematics problems. Sixth formers are used well to mentor younger students and each other. Students speak particularly highly of the accessibility to impromptu help from the mathematics team at breaks and lunchtime.
- The school has strong links with primary schools and delivers regular sessions for gifted and talented pupils in Year 5 and 6. An annual mathematics challenge event promotes enjoyment of mathematics among primary pupils and provides an opportunity for primary teachers to share experiences with each other and the Queen Elizabeth's team. The school is an active participant in the UK Mathematics Challenge, entering students at all levels with teams reaching the finals in some years.

Teaching in mathematics is outstanding.

- All teachers are experienced subject specialists who have a passion for teaching and a love of mathematics. The quality of teaching is consistently high. Temporary cover for absent teachers is provided by an able mathematician who has a teaching qualification from outside the United Kingdom.
- All teachers work hard to build a thorough grasp of underlying concepts and are prepared to take students back several steps to secure understanding. Teachers have different teaching styles. Very creative and

innovative ideas are utilised well by some while others use a more traditional but highly skilled approach.

- Teachers are extremely adept at moving around the classroom to check students' understanding and progress. They join in discussions, pose challenging and provocative questions and probe misconceptions very effectively. They use their experience well to anticipate common misunderstandings in order to avoid them. Marking is improving strongly and regular written feedback is given. Students heed well the good advice that they are given.

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding.

- GCSE pass rates are very high. In 2014, all Year 11 students obtained a grade C or above and over half achieved a grade A* or A. By the end of Year 11, the proportion making better than expected progress is much higher than average and value-added statistics confirm that Queen Elizabeth's students make much better progress than similar students nationally. A-level pass rates are high with a larger-than-average proportion of high grades. Disadvantaged students achieve in line with their peers.
- Students participate very well in class and are not daunted by challenging or unusual tasks. They have the confidence to put forward ideas and develop resilience and self-reliance from an early age. They will ponder on problems, refer back to earlier work and ask each other before seeking help from the teacher. Challenging tasks and questions ensure that the most able are fully stretched.
- The work in students' books confirms that they make very good progress and corrections to their work show that they are learning well from their mistakes.

Areas for improvement

The visit has identified no areas for improvement that are not already being addressed effectively.

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