

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



15 December 2014

Mrs G Thomson
Headteacher
St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
Church Road
Cainscross
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL5 4JE

Dear Mrs Thomson

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 4 December 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 you, the mathematics leader, discussions with pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and assessment information; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- You are demonstrating decisive leadership in strengthening the teaching of mathematics. You have challenged the teachers to look afresh at how they inspire and encourage pupils to become motivated learners. You, along with the mathematics leader, undertake an effective combination of lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, and regular checks on attainment. This monitoring work allows leaders and staff to review the progress towards ensuring that the quality of teaching is good and that pupils are achieving more strongly than in the past.
- You provide a very clear vision of how lessons should be structured to encourage successful mathematicians. This results in lessons that are often practical and encourage pupils to talk about their mathematics. The

approach embodies the spirit of pupils challenging each other and not being fearful of making mistakes.

- Weaker teaching is addressed through close collaboration with the local authority's mathematics support team. The effective training of learning support assistants ensures their time helps pupils improve their skills and apply these to 'new' work. Many of the disadvantaged pupils are benefitting from this use of the pupil premium funding.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Termly planning has evolved over the last four terms. Units are linked into a unified programme so that pupils are able to make connections within their learning. However, lesson observations and looking at books indicate that the breadth and depth of work in geometry is often unduly restrained.
- Lesson planning is guided by a blend of the new National Curriculum requirements alongside a range of exciting and well-resourced experiences that bring mathematics to life. All staff are engaged in developing the mathematics curriculum and this brings cohesion to pupils' experiences.
- Practical activities and teachers' challenging questions are a feature of all the lessons. Pupils respond extremely positively. They are highly motivated by their lessons; reporting they 'love' mathematics.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic in their teaching of mathematics. Their expectation that pupils will get on and work well together strengthens pupils' willingness to take risks and explore mathematical ideas and reasoning.
- Teachers refine the success measures used in the lessons to provide secure assessments. They plan their mathematics lessons carefully using this information. Teachers keep their groups flexible so that pupils get the right level of challenge for their needs. Extra teachers are used well to help pupils improve in confidence.
- Teachers build in time for pupils to explain their answers. Extra challenges are chosen to help the teacher check that understanding is well embedded. However, the challenges do not always help pupils to deepen their thinking.
- Marking is regular and teachers keep a close eye on pupils who are struggling to understand. Pupils are expected to go back over their work, find their mistakes, and correct them. Interventions are planned effectively so that pupils do not get left behind.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Typically, attainment in mathematics in the Year 2 national tests and assessments has been average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was similar to the national picture in the last two years.

- Attainment in Year 6 tests is average. The gap between those who receive pupil premium funding and other pupils is negligible. Last year this group achieved better than other pupils in the school and nationally.
- The proportion of pupils reaching above national average levels fluctuates. In the past, the school has relied too much on pupils catching up in Year 6. Consequently, some more able pupils have not had time to consolidate their skills and reach the higher level.
- More able pupils in Key Stage 2 are now making rapid progress because the work encourages deeper thinking. They are enthusiastic, and persevere keenly with demanding work.
- The good teaching and good curriculum is ensuring pupils' mathematical development is good overall throughout the Key Stage 2 years; pupils make good progress.
- Across the school, pupils respond positively to the motivating teaching. Pupils are taught to use mathematical language effectively and express their thinking and strategies for problem solving confidently.
- Plenty of daily and varied mental arithmetic practice is contributing to good progress in recalling facts quickly. Lessons extend pupils' ability to use these facts in a range of ways, including through problem solving and in developing a range of calculation strategies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more guidance for all teachers on how to develop pupils' knowledge and reasoning about geometry
- offering pupils open-ended challenges that will help them broaden and deepen their thinking.

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