

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr A Sapey
Headteacher
Cornholme Junior, Infant and Nursery School
Greenfield Terrace
Cornholme
Todmorden
West Yorkshire
OL14 8PL

Dear Mr Sapey

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 March 2015 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 relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and observation of teaching and learning in lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics requires improvement.

Leadership and management of mathematics require improvement.

- Leaders have a clear view of what needs to improve in mathematics. Although plans to develop work in mathematics do not set out precisely how success will be measured, the actions leaders are proposing to take are the correct ones. Nevertheless, progress on tackling issues in mathematics identified at the last inspection has been slow and not enough impact is evident.
- Leaders have monitored work in mathematics through observations, scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, and learning walks. However, these checks have not focused enough on pupils' mathematical development or on ensuring that evaluations emphasise the difference that leaders' actions are having on improving teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- The school has adopted a framework for implementing the content of the new National Curriculum and teachers have received training on it. Guidance for teachers has ensured appropriate coverage of the curriculum but too little

emphasis has been placed on developing teachers' subject expertise, particularly in developing pupils' reasoning skills and ensuring sequences of learning build systematically on what pupils know, understand and can already do.

The curriculum in mathematics requires improvement.

- The framework used by the school covers the required content of the new National Curriculum. However, work in pupils' books indicates resources are not always used precisely enough to support pupils' learning and ensure that their understanding of mathematical concepts is secure before they move on.
- Leaders have identified weaknesses in the development of pupils' reasoning skills. However, current guidance for teachers does not support this key area.
- While guidance for teachers on teaching addition, subtraction, multiplication and division is provided, work in pupils' books shows teachers are not following it consistently.

Teaching in mathematics requires improvement.

- The quality of teaching varies across the school. Observations showed some good practice in teaching. For example, Year 2 pupils were using sorting pallets, counters and number cards to investigate which whole numbers could be used in division calculations to give a whole number answer. Pupils, particularly the most able, were suggesting rules and testing them out to see if they were true. The teacher used skilful questioning to help pupils discover whether these rules were always true or whether they could disprove them.
- Leaders are aware of some weaker teaching in the school and the impact it is having on pupils' progress. Additional support and interventions have been put in place to help pupils catch up. The school's data shows this support is helping most pupils to maintain expected progress but not enough pupils are making the accelerated progress they need to catch up from earlier weaker progress.
- Teachers' use of assessment to ensure work is set at the right level requires improvement. Too often, pupils repeat work they have already learnt when they begin a new topic. As one pupil put it, 'sometimes we go back and do it again'.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers' comments are positive and encouraging. However, errors in pupils' work are not always used to pick up on misconceptions in a timely manner and help pupils to overcome them.
- In lessons, teachers make use of additional adults to work with pupils. While their support is helpful, it too often restricts opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. In the early years classes, adults' questioning and direction miss chances to build on children's curiosity and deepen their understanding. As a result, children's opportunities to think critically, explore and use what they know in their play are sometimes limited.

Achievement in mathematics requires improvement.

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment has remained at broadly average levels. However, overall levels of progress for pupils by the end of Year 6 have remained below the average nationally. Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1 has also

remained broadly average. However, not all pupils who started Year 1 at expected levels of development have made enough progress by the time they leave Year 2. In the early years classes, gaps between the achievement of children in the school and the national picture of mathematical development have increased.

- The school's data show that the most pupils are making expected progress and some, particularly the most able, are making good progress. Overall, pupils who are supported by funding from the pupil premium are doing as well as their peers. However, the proportion of pupils making less than expected progress is greater than is typical, particularly for less-able pupils. Pupils' progress also slows at the transition points between different key stages.
- Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are positive and they value the help and support they receive. They work together co-operatively when set practical tasks and are enthusiastic when given problems to solve and investigative activities. However, the extent to which they are able to reason mathematically and apply their understanding in different contexts is limited.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement throughout the school, particularly of less-able and the younger pupils, by:
 - strengthening teachers' subject knowledge to underpin a greater focus on developing pupils' mathematical understanding and reasoning skills
 - ensuring teachers plan sequences of lessons that build carefully on what pupils know, understand and can already do
 - ensuring that teaching and support for less-able pupils enable them to catch up quickly
 - ensuring adults' provide opportunities to build on what younger children show they are curious about and deepen their mathematical understanding
- strengthening subject leadership in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that monitoring activities emphasise mathematical development and focus on the impact of initiatives and approaches to teaching in evaluations and feedback to teachers
 - sharpening improvement plans for mathematics to include foci on improving the quality of teaching and the development of pupils' conceptual understanding and mathematical reasoning.

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

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector