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Mrs J Menzies
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Menzies

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 16 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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics requires improvement.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Mathematics is well led. Since the previous inspection, the weakest teaching has been eradicated and leadership of the subject has been strengthened. Recruitment and training have been effective. Consequently, teaching and achievement are improving.
- The mathematics leader was appointed in September 2014. He has established a curriculum that is closely matched to the requirements of the school community. He has demonstrated an expert understanding of what constitutes effective primary practice and is a very good role model for other teachers. He has led staff in revising and embedding the calculations policy, establishing non-negotiable expectations for mental arithmetic across all years. He has also led training on mental arithmetic.
- These initiatives are strengthening teaching across the school, but insufficient time has been given to checking that all teachers have

embedded the training into their practice. Consequently, the quality of teaching still varies. For example, some teachers do not teach problem solving and reasoning well enough.

The curriculum in mathematics requires improvement.

- The curriculum has been extremely well planned to develop the aims of fluency, reasoning and problem solving. It has been adopted by the local authority as an example of good practice that other schools are now using.
- While some teachers now implement the curriculum successfully, others are not as effective. These teachers demonstrate that they are not able to teach mathematics well enough currently to implement the aims of the curriculum in their lessons. Particularly at Key Stage 1, problem solving and reasoning are not well enough taught.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the activities that children can take part in do not stretch or deepen the learning of the most able. For example, the activities observed concentrated on the most basic skills in counting and shape recognition.
- In some classes, opportunities to develop pupils' conceptual understanding and proficiency with numbers are not developed as well as they could be because the pupils have limited access to practical apparatus designed to help them with their number work.

Teaching in mathematics requires improvement.

- Work in pupils' books in some classes shows that pupils do not do sufficient work that stretches them or deepens their learning. Too often, pupils are set exercises that repeat the same type of algorithm so that they complete them mechanically and do not need to think hard about how to complete them correctly.
- Some teachers do not use their prior knowledge of pupils' learning to plan the next steps. This is often the case when the gap between completing a topic and then returning to it is of a month or so. In addition, some pupils are left with insecure understanding that is not addressed, for instance through intervention, at the stage when the topic is completed initially. When these pupils return to the topic later, they have forgotten what it is they were trying to learn before, and can struggle mathematically with ideas that build on from the earlier learning.
- Generally, teaching has improved since the school's last inspection. In Key Stage 2 in particular, problem solving and reasoning are now often taught very effectively. Groups of more able pupils enjoy the challenge of working together to solve more complex number problems.

Achievement in mathematics requires improvement.

- The gap in attainment between disadvantage pupils and the others in school is wide. In national tests in 2014, disadvantaged Year 6 pupils were approximately two terms behind the other Year 6 pupils in the school. The

school's data indicate a similar gap for pupils currently in Year 6. However, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally is narrowing. This is because the progress of all pupils is increasing as a result of improved teaching. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are also making better progress than last year.

- Current data show that the proportion of pupils in Year 6 likely to attain the higher levels is greater than last year, but it is still below average.
- The school's data show that improved teaching in Years 1 to 4 has resulted in disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils making faster progress. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and the others in these year groups is much narrower than in the past.
- Pupils demonstrate very good behaviour in mathematic lessons because they enjoy them. They demonstrate resilience and enthusiastic attitudes to problem solving.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment by narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and the others
- developing teachers' expertise in teaching problem solving and reasoning effectively
- ensuring that teachers look carefully at pupils' previous work when planning the next steps and take care to enable pupils to master the learning planned for them, including through timely intervention.

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

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector