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Mrs Dickinson and Mrs Tomlinson
Acting Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Dickinson and Mrs Tomlinson

Ofsted 2014–15 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 20 May 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 I used to inform the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses included: discussions with you and with the teacher who leads mathematics; a discussion with a group of pupils; observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's documents.

Leadership and management of mathematics

- Your relentless determination and skilled improvement planning, as acting headteachers, have been integral to the increase in pupils' achievement in mathematics. You have transformed the school's systems to make sure that all staff are knowledgeable about, and responsible for, pupils' progress in their classes. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected and the higher levels by the end of Year 6 has started to rise.
- Your focus on training and development of staff is working. All staff received training in how to use visual images and equipment in their lessons. Teachers use such resources and images to help develop pupils' understanding in different strands of mathematics including problem solving.
- Senior leaders and governors are now aware of the large gaps in attainment and progress between different groups of pupils within the school and also nationally. However, no cross-school interventions, initiatives or changes to teaching have been introduced to reduce the gap

between the groups. For example, the gap between the achievement of summer- and autumn-born children or between the Indian, white British and Pakistani heritage pupils.

The curriculum in mathematics

- In line with new national requirements, the curriculum has been amended to have greater coverage of problem solving. At present this is managed principally through solving word problems. Other forms of problem solving are at an early stage of development.
- Teachers have introduced some promising initiatives to develop pupils' reasoning skills through, for example, guided reasoning sessions. In lessons, a greater emphasis is placed on pupils explaining their ideas and methods and on showing how they worked out their answers.
- The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes is highly effective. Pupils explore and work with numbers up to and beyond 20. High-quality resources indoors and outdoors enable children to be fully involved in activities which have been designed by teachers to deepen children's knowledge and understanding.
- Ensuring progression in learning at transition between year groups and into secondary school is underdeveloped. As a result, for example, the Year 1 curriculum does not build well enough on children's skills and knowledge they have shown in Reception. In another example, during my visit, classes in three different year groups were completing bar charts at a very similar level. Year 4 pupils told me they had already learnt about and could do bar charts in Years 2 and 3.

Teaching in mathematics

- Some teachers make good use of their assessments of pupils' knowledge to plan subsequent lessons that build on pupils' skills and they tackle errors and any misconceptions pupils have. However, some teachers do not take enough account of pupils' prior learning. They provide activities that are too easy or too narrow in their scope, and which stifle pupils' progress.
- The quality and impact of teaching show significant variability. Teachers use some unhelpful rules, terminology or methods which has inhibited pupils' mathematical understanding and skills.
- Teachers use a variety of well-chosen resources such as interactive whiteboards and computer software to help them explain mathematical ideas to pupils. Teachers' explanations and instructions about how to solve calculations are clear. Teachers monitor the class to check pupils can complete the task and are not making errors.
- The most-able pupils make slow progress during their time in the school because in some year groups they are not challenged enough by their work. In other classes, they move on too quickly without deepening their understanding of the aspect of mathematics they are learning.

Achievement in mathematics

- The youngest children achieve very well. They quickly develop a fluent working knowledge of number through counting, ordering and recognising numbers, and completing calculations in a range of activities. Children have positive attitudes to learning. They respond well to adults' skilled questions. By the end of Reception, children's attainment is above the national average and shows little difference between groups of children.
- In the rest of the school, pupils' achievement is uneven. For example, pupils lose ground in Year 1 from the gains they made in Nursery and Reception. Pupils' progress quickens in Year 2 because work is more challenging so by the end of Year 2 standards are close to the national average. Few pupils, however, attain the higher Level 3 indicating that the most able pupils at the end of Reception have made slow progress during Key Stage 1. Many of the gains made in Year 2 are lost because progress slows again in Years 3 and 4.
- By the end of Year 6, although most pupils make expected progress from Year 2, too few make more than expected progress. Similarly, too few attain the higher Level 5. The pupils whose circumstances make them disadvantaged achieve poorly and, on average, their attainment is almost two years behind other pupils' attainment nationally. This indicates the extra fund to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is not spent effectively.
- The pupils I spoke with said that mathematics had improved this year and was more enjoyable because they have more problems to solve, complete different types of activity, and learn a wider range of mathematical topics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising pupils' attainment so that the proportion of pupils exceeding the standard expected for their age at least matches national averages. In 2015, this relates to pupils attaining Level 3 by the end of Year 2, and Level 5 by the end of Year 6
- ensuring that the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils closes rapidly
- taking action to improve the impact of transition between year groups to ensure pupils' progress continues strongly and they make good progress within mathematics topics from one year to the next.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics in the school. 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 the local authority.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector