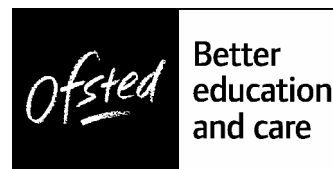


Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE  
T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6644  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



27 September 2006

Mr D Sharratt  
Principal  
Braunton School and Community College  
Barton Lane  
Braunton  
North Devon  
EX33 2BP

Dear Mr Sharratt

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 and 26 September 2006 to look at work in mathematics. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on pupils' enjoyment and understanding of 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with some staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of nine parts of lessons and a scrutiny of the North Devon mathematics website and other electronic resources.

The overall effectiveness of the subject, mathematics, was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in mathematics are satisfactory overall.

- The school made wise use of extra funding following its accreditation as a specialist mathematics and computing college to enhance learning in mathematics, for example by making class sizes in Year 7 smaller and by focusing on pupils in Key Stage 4 who were capable of grade C at GCSE but not on track for it. These and other strategies, together with satisfactory teaching throughout the department, meant that standards in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations rose markedly in 2006, and standards are now above average. When considered in the light of their past achievement and other factors, these standards indicate good achievement.

- Whilst pupils are compliant in lessons, they are passive learners, and this is not challenged by the style of teaching of the subject in most classrooms. This has an impact on their enjoyment and understanding of the subject and, by Key Stage 4, a small number of pupils become disaffected and disengage from learning. Consequently, they do not achieve as well as they might.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory.

- Many lessons follow a traditional model in which the teacher presents a new topic, pupils make notes and all complete the same routine questions. This enables pupils to recognise how to tackle particular questions and successfully make progress. However, teachers do not involve pupils enough in learning to really generate understanding – for example, questioning is frequently too shallow to uncover and deal with misconceptions, although teachers do this well when they respond to pupils' own questions individually.
- Methods, such as those promoted by the Secondary National Strategy are not used consistently; for example, the use of 'show me' boards to check the understanding of all pupils and to ensure tasks closely match the needs of each individual before the class practise a skill.
- Pupils' performance is regularly and accurately assessed and pupils have online access to their current and target levels. This enables them and their parents to know exactly how well they are doing, but the targets are not couched in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to develop and there are no displays of, for example, the expectations of the National Curriculum at each level in classrooms to support pupils to know how to improve.
- However, the quality of marking in pupils' books is good, and clearly highlights what they need to do to improve their work. It is not usual for pupils to be told exactly what it is they are expected to learn in a lesson, nor to reflect on their learning at the end.
- The outcome is that pupils are not actively involved in their own learning enough, which contributes to the disaffection of older pupils and hinders the development of true understanding.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has developed extensive online resources including worksheets that are accurately levelled and which include progressively harder skills.
- However, the formal schemes of work do not include guidance to staff on how to present topics. For example, although displays include examples of pupils' investigative work, such approaches are not interwoven into the scheme of work. This means that many lessons rely on electronic worksheets and pupils are not engaged enough.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.

- As noted above, achievement has been improved by the wise use of additional resources available as a result of the school's specialist status.
- Monitoring and evaluation activities have until recently focused on the effective analysis of data rather than what goes on in the classroom and there has not been enough emphasis on the quality of learning. In particular, the departmental self-review and action plan do not have learning at their hearts. The school acknowledges that the focus needs to be squarely on the quality of learning and teaching to maintain good standards now that the additional funding is no longer available.

## Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils have satisfactory enjoyment and understanding. Competent teaching ensures that they are able to make progress, and the online assessment system helps them to see that progress taking place. However, pupils are not actively involved in their own learning and they experience a narrow range of teaching styles that do not consistently focus on understanding or ensure that every pupil is challenged beyond their comfort zone. These are barriers to pupils developing understanding and enjoying the subject.

## Inclusion

The department has a well qualified permanent teaching assistant who is used effectively in a variety of ways to support the learning of those who might be vulnerable, for example, pupils who are disengaging from learning in Key Stage 4. This ensures that pupils who are in danger of underachievement are not disadvantaged and make the same overall progress as their peers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the recasting of formal schemes of work to include advice on how to foster enjoyment and understanding, incorporating more investigational and practical activities and good practice from the Secondary National Strategy
- the improvement of the use of assessment within lessons to make sure that tasks presented to pupils closely match their individual needs
- the development of target setting to ensure that pupils know exactly how to improve in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding they should acquire to progress and to enable them to take a more active part in their own learning.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Knight  
Additional Inspector