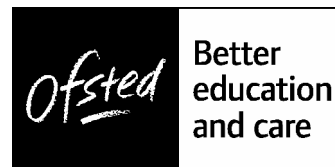


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12 October 2006

Mrs K Powell
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Powell

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation and that of Mr Grimes the head teacher designate, as well as your staff, during my visit on 11 October 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics across Years R to 6 is inadequate.

Achievement and standards

- Childrens' mathematical development on entry to the school varies between broadly average and below average. In 2005, standards were significantly below average by the end of Year 2 for pupils who entered the reception class with broadly average skills for their age. Consequently this represented inadequate progress. Early indications from the 2006 Year 2 assessments suggest standards were broadly average.
- In 2005, the performance of Year 6 pupils in the national mathematics tests was significantly below average and represented inadequate achievement. Early indications from the 2006 Year 6 national tests show that standards have fallen further.

- Changes in staffing and the weak management have restricted pupils' progress. In particular, the more able pupils have lacked sufficient challenge and those pupils with learning difficulties have not done as well as their classmates as the support provided has not been sufficient. Action has now been taken to redress this but the full impact has yet to be felt. Green shoots are starting to appear as seen currently by the pupils' satisfactory progress in lessons.
- Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics. They are gaining in confidence and gradually learning to express themselves more fluently using technical terms.

Quality of teaching and learning

- Teaching and learning are now satisfactory. Team work between teachers has recently improved and good practice has started to be shared; for example, through the demonstration lessons given by the new subject leader. Of the lessons observed all were satisfactory and some had good features.
- Teachers generally have a sound knowledge and understanding in mathematics. They are enthusiastic and have a good rapport with the pupils. Homework is set regularly to consolidate learning with sanctions applied for those who fail to hand it in. Information and communication technology is used as a teaching aid in lessons. Teachers' appropriate use of questioning means pupils are keen to suggest their ideas.
- However, teachers' checks on pupils' understanding and that their rate of progress is enough for them to reach their potential are not sufficiently developed. This results partially from the fact that teachers have not yet been trained in the use of assessment to promote learning. Consequently where pupils know their current levels and targets they are not clear enough on how to improve. Data on pupils' performance are available but have not been used well enough to respond to pupils who are underachieving or would individually benefit from further challenge.

Quality of the curriculum

- Whilst a basic curriculum is in place to meet most pupils' needs, it does not go far enough to provide for the higher ability. Schemes of work are in place but are not sufficiently developed to support teachers in maximising pupils' learning.
- No clear steer has been given by the leadership to integrate mathematics into the teaching of other subjects. The using and applying strand of mathematics is not a strong enough feature in lessons and pupils' progress in this area is not monitored.

Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of mathematics are inadequate. The teaching team has until very recently been without direction and consequently their confidence has been very low.

- However, indications are present of the sound capacity and clarity of vision of the recently appointed acting headteacher and headteacher designate. They are working hard to improve the provision in mathematics. This is apparent in the teachers' sense of purpose, as well as the planning now in place to raise achievement.
- However, the impact of such actions has not yet been enough to compensate for the legacy of underachievement and ensure good learning. Monitoring of teaching has not been undertaken to check upon the progress and learning made in lessons or to share good practice.
- Effective departmental self-review and action planning has not been carried out until very recently. Of the 17 key issues for improvement identified last year only one, the setting of individual targets, had been accomplished. Teachers have not had access to appropriate professional development and hence they have not been sufficiently focussed on raising achievement.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

- Most pupils have satisfactory enjoyment of their lessons especially when working in groups to solve problems. However, pupils feel they get least enjoyment when they spend too much time talking about the work rather than doing it or when interrupted by the small amount of weaker behaviour.
- The pupils have a developing understanding of mathematics. Most are at an early stage in seeing the links between various areas of mathematics and how to use their previous learning to solve problems. Displays in and around classrooms are helpful in promoting the pupils' understanding and enjoyment of their learning.

Inclusion

Inclusion is inadequate. Mathematics has not met the pupils' needs, especially of the more able, as seen in the inadequate progress made in national tests. The leadership and management have not given an adequate sense of direction for inclusion and so appropriate action has not been taken where underachievement was identified. Teachers' lesson plans meet the needs of various groups of pupils within each class but are not sufficiently developed to enable individuals to achieve their potential. For example, some pupils state that the level of work is too easy for them. Some pupils also say that they do not get enough support and so feel frustrated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- focusing strongly on raising pupils' achievement and ensuring they are clear on how to improve
- setting up a system of monitoring to challenge and support teaching as well as share good practice
- improving teachers' use of assessment data in planning lessons so they are clear on how to meet individual pupils' needs.

I hope these observations are useful as you 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

Mark Wilson
Additional Inspector