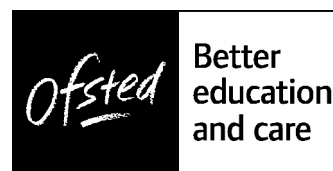


Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6644  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



13 October 2006

Miss J Hornby  
Headteacher  
Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School  
Kenilworth Road  
St Annes  
Lancashire  
FY8 1LB

Dear Miss Hornby

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 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 the subject, mathematics, was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

- Standards are high throughout the school. This is reflected in pupils' performance in national tests. Results are rising faster than the national trend, especially so in Year 6. Boys and girls of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make very good progress. This is because the philosophy of the school is based on discovering and meeting each pupil's needs through high quality care, guidance, support and resources.
- Underpinning the provision is the all-embracing commitment to making learning an enjoyable experience that opens the door to new challenges every day. Children make an excellent start in the Reception class so that by the time they reach Year 1 they are avid learners. Pupils' mental agility is stretched to the limit in lessons; they complete numerical operations accurately and use mathematical language correctly.

- Pupils' personal development is excellent. Development of the whole child is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are visible in lessons and in the energetic manner in which they involve themselves in all the school offers.

### Quality of teaching and learning

- Teaching and learning are very good. Exemplary practice was observed in Year 6 in a lesson that absorbed pupils' interest from start to finish. This was because the rapid, challenging questioning demanded reasons and constantly made pupils: 'Think! Think! Think!' They did.
- The consistent quality of the teaching is the outcome of the school's decision to make teaching and learning strategies the foci of its work. Teachers often test out and trial methods with each other before using them in lessons. This helps them to understand what the pupils' response might be. Hence, through sharing common experiences, teachers and learners work closely together.
- Teachers constantly impress on pupils the importance of taking time to reflect on their answers. This has a positive effect on accuracy, and in the astute questions pupils ask when they need help from the teachers.
- Teachers plan their work carefully with the range of abilities in the class clearly in mind; for example, in a mixed-age class, challenging work was well targeted at subgroups within larger groups. Teachers have high expectations to which pupils respond. Written work is well marked. Helpful comments guide pupils to the next step and sometimes result in a written response from the pupil.
- The school uses very well its tracking system for monitoring pupils' progress. Immediate, short-term action is taken with individuals or groups of pupils if lack of understanding in a specific topic is seen to be holding back progress in other aspects. The quality of teaching and the assessment system are the backbones of pupils' very good achievement.

### Quality of the curriculum

- The curriculum shouts out 'Excellence and Enjoyment'. Pupils take their work seriously and are keen to do well; at the same time they say that 'learning is fun'. The curriculum allows for maximum flexibility for pupils of all ages and abilities. It leads to pupils' competency in skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology as well as to good promotion of reasoning and thinking skills. These are highlighted in teachers' planning.
- Teachers use a creative range of strategies to sustain pupils' interest in lessons including 'brain gym' and physical exercise to keeps pupils' bodies supple. The very good curriculum, resources and wide range of additional activities contribute extremely well to pupils' well-being.

### Leadership and management

- 'We teach mathematics through enjoyment and challenge'. The spin-off from this is the high level of performance and the pupils' growing ability to reason for

themselves in all aspects of the work. The leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding and are at the root of the school's success in this subject.

- Teachers are constantly engaged in very good professional development. Self-critical evaluation leads to a constant search for ways to improve even more, for example, by helping teachers to frame questions so that they can accurately determine the reasons for pupils' understanding, or not, of the work.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils enjoy mathematics and are at ease with problem-solving because it is an integral part of the work in every lesson. It is flagged up explicitly in lesson plans; pupils know and expect that teachers will look for evidence of reasoning when marking written work. Similarly, in oral sessions, teachers encourage pupils to 'think aloud' so that others may add their comments. Pupils are not afraid to have their mistakes used to help others learn and progress the lesson. A typical example of excellent practice was observed in a mixed-age Year 4/5 lesson where pupils systematically tried out and recorded different ways of combining objects. Through trial and error, they realised that it was sensible to think through a route to the answer before putting pen to paper.

Inclusion

The ethos of the school is underpinned by the way that everyone is valued for their contribution to it. Pupils are treated as individuals whose talents and potential are nurtured to fruition. Parents and carers are provided with good opportunities to become involved in children's learning, which many do. Pupils strive to do well and to meet the teachers' expectations. All pupils achieve equally well because of the very good all-round provision.

In conclusion, the school knows exactly where it is going as it continues to strive for excellence in mathematics. The inspection has raised no new areas for improvement.

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

June Tracey  
Additional Inspector