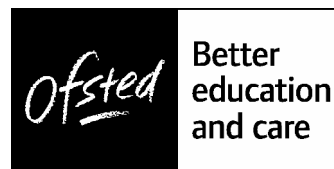


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Mrs S Ward-Scott  
Headteacher  
Sir John Offley CofE (VC) Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Ward-Scott

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 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, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

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

#### Achievement and standards

- Children enter the nursery with weaker skills and knowledge than typical for their age. Focused teaching enables them to make good progress and many enter Year 1 having achieved the goals expected.
- Standards in National Curriculum tests in Years 2 and 6 in 2006 were in the average range. However the proportion of pupils who gained the highest levels was a little lower than that seen nationally. When these standards are considered in the light of pupils' previous attainment, they suggest satisfactory achievement, a picture confirmed by observations of pupils in lessons and an analysis of their completed work. The school has recently focused on improving standards in

literacy, and this focus, together with some recent staffing instability, has also had the effect that standards in mathematics have not risen in line with the national picture recently. However, the focus has now shifted to mathematics and improvements are evident in lessons because tasks are more closely matched to pupils' needs.

- Nevertheless, there is some evidence that the most capable could do better. Extra classes designed to boost performance are planned to take place next term. In lessons, pupils are attentive and very well behaved, although if the pace slackens they can become restless and inattentive.

### Quality of teaching and learning

- Teaching is satisfactory, but there is clear evidence that it is improving. One improvement is the quality of planning to meet the needs of all in the class. The tasks teachers now expect different pupils to attempt are more closely matched to their needs and are enabling better progress.
- However, the school's assessment data still points to some inconsistencies in the level of challenge for the most capable.
- Individual questioning and discussion are effective in helping pupils to improve. Clear explanations mean that everyone knows exactly what they need to do and lessons proceed in an atmosphere of calm industry.
- There is little evidence that information and communication technology (ICT) is used to support pupils' learning.
- Formal assessment is now rigorously carried out so that any pupils in danger of underachievement are readily identified. Short-term assessment is used well informally to decide on the tasks pupils should attempt, and marking, especially in Key Stage 2, is helpful and encouraging. However, the use of short-term targets to motivate pupils and help them know what they need to do to improve is in its infancy.

### Quality of the curriculum

- The scheme of work is based on the expectations of the Primary National Strategy. It ensures that pupils meet progressively more difficult work, although there is some evidence that there is some inconsistency in the challenge in the curriculum for the most capable.
- Whilst opportunities for pupils to engage in practical and investigative activities are not expressly mentioned in schemes, they are evident both in pupils' completed work and in some lessons observed.
- A positive feature of the curriculum is how it has been amended following an analysis of pupils' performance in assessments. However, schemes include little about how to use ICT to improve learning.

### Leadership and management

- Leadership is good. You and the co-ordinator for mathematics share a very clear vision for how the subject should develop and this has already resulted in improvements in progress in Years 2 and 6. Self-evaluation is particularly strong,

based on analyses of data and a programme of direct observations. An analysis of test results, for example, revealed that across the whole school, pupils' understanding of shape was less well developed than other areas. The resulting action was very evident in classrooms, with colourful, inviting displays and a variety of techniques in use to ensure that pupils experienced the properties of shape from a variety of angles.

- Staff understand what is expected of them and are rising to the challenge with enthusiasm. However, whilst the actions taken have had some positive impact, it is too early to judge their impact in terms of improving standards in National Curriculum tests.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils say they enjoy mathematics lessons because it is well taught and the work, whilst hard, is not too hard! The developing use of practical and investigative techniques is enabling both their understanding of the subject and their enjoyment of it. Year 6 pupils spoke animatedly as they discussed whether they could ever find an exact solution, by trial and improvement, to  $11 \times ? = 100$ . This level of enjoyment is fostered by challenging, fast moving teaching. However, when lessons lack pace, pupils' enjoyment is reduced as they can become inattentive.

Inclusion

All groups of pupils are now making satisfactory progress and the school is aware that the level of challenge for the most capable has been patchy. Nevertheless, thoughtful support for pupils who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties and disabilities enables them to make similar progress to their peers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raise standards and improve achievement, especially of the more capable pupils
- make more and better use of ICT to support 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