

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6644
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Veronica Bradbury
Headteacher
Allfarthing Primary School
St Ann's Crescent
Wandsworth
London
SW18 2LR

Dear Mrs Bradbury

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 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 parts of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Pupils make particularly good progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Well-targeted support has enabled lower attainers to make very good progress.
- For some higher attainers, progress is slower in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.
- Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils work hard and behave well.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers keep good records of pupils' progress and adapt their planning well after each lesson.
- Assessment is used effectively to track everyone's progress and to select pupils for special support.
- Good team work between teachers and support staff helps pupils make good progress.
- Some pair and group work leads to very good learning but there is room for more effective grouping and targeting of activities to ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged.
- Many pupils regularly assess how well they are doing in lessons, although they do not all have a good idea of their overall progress or push themselves to do better.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- It is broad yet tailored effectively for each lesson, with separate support sessions for lower attainers.
- It offers a good range of opportunities to learn through information and communication technology, self-assessment and problem solving. There is scope for greater consistency in providing these for pupils.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. They use it well to introduce changes and identify targets for improvement. They use evidence astutely to evaluate progress against these targets.
- Assessment of each pupil's attainment is particularly thorough and leads to well-targeted support. However, it is not always aggregated effectively enough to monitor progress in mathematics overall and by groups of pupils each year.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

The school has correctly identified the need to improve pupils' understanding of mathematics. Its strong focus on regular problem-solving lessons, and on posing problems, provides a firm base for extending the emphasis on thinking and understanding throughout all lessons. Pupils enjoy working on problems and in groups. On some occasions, pupils are not encouraged to think as hard as they might by the activities set for them or because explanations are provided too quickly.

Inclusion

- The good support for lower attainers in each key stage ensures that they reach high enough standards to benefit from the next stage of their education.
- Staff monitor and support each pupil conscientiously, but activities do not always challenge all pupils enough.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- planning activities and the ways pupils are grouped to improve the challenge for all pupils
- extending the emphasis on thinking and understanding throughout lessons
- giving pupils greater responsibility for their own learning through self-assessment
- monitoring progress overall and for groups each year.

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

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector