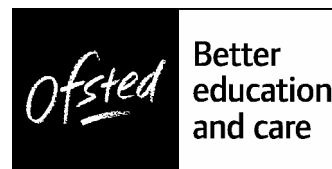


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03 November 2006

Mr J Telling
Head Learner
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Dear Mr Telling

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with my colleague Maria Dawes HMI on 2 November 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards in 2006 at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were much improved. Particularly impressive was the number of pupils attaining Level 5 at the end of Year 6 which rose from just 8% in 2005 to 26% in 2006.
- Over the last few years, standards in mathematics have been low though, considering the pupils' below average attainment when starting school, they have achieved well. There remain pockets of underachievement and gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills due to previous disruption in staffing. The school is aware of this, though assessment methods and intervention strategies to enable pupils to catch up have, so far, been arranged by individual teachers or year teams.

- Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are good; they work with enthusiasm and, when they have the opportunity, collaborate with each other impressively. Work in books was generally well presented and thoughtfully completed.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- There were examples of excellent planning and in all the lessons and pupils had a clear understanding of what they were learning.
- Teaching and learning included a wide range of interactive strategies to engage pupils in lessons. However this was not consistent and some teaching did not involve all pupils actively and missed opportunities to develop the pupils' communication and reasoning skills.
- In all lessons there is a clear focus on mathematical language and the correct use of specific vocabulary.
- There is a very positive mathematical learning environment in the school.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Teachers support each other effectively when planning in their teaching teams; planning is detailed and most reflects a good range of learning styles and accommodates the full range of the pupils' needs.
- Although 'Using and Applying Mathematics' features in many lessons, there are inconsistencies in provision.
- There is good support for supporting pupils with very weak mathematical skills with intervention groups focused on individual education plan targets. Provision for the most able pupils is limited to differentiated activities in the lessons.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- The mathematics subject leader has had few opportunities to carry out a rigorous evaluation of mathematics provision across the school. You are fully aware of the need to improve the school's self-evaluation systems. A reasonable mathematics action plan has been developed, though the subject leader needs to ensure the monitoring identified on the plan takes place to make certain improvements are implemented appropriately and the quality teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the school.
- At present, planning is not regularly or consistently monitored by the subject leader to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning of mathematics across the school.
- The team ethos of the school is strong; there is good mutual support within the staff and the senior team is very supportive of your drive to raise standards.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

- The lessons observed and discussions held with pupils indicated a pleasing level of enjoyment from boys and girls of all abilities. They commented particularly favourably on the appropriate level of challenge in lessons, the practical nature of many learning experiences and having opportunities to discuss and work with their peers in the lessons.
- The older pupils appreciated the detailed marking of the teachers. However, they were unsure about their individual targets for improvement. There are different target-setting processes in Years 2 and 6; the younger pupils had a more secure grasp on what they needed to do to improve. The older pupils would appreciate the opportunity to take greater responsibility for their own improvement by knowing specifically what aspects of mathematics they need to improve.

Inclusion

- The school has an inclusive ethos. Observations of lessons indicated that most teachers catered for the needs of all the pupils.
- The school analyses the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils carefully. In mathematics, the boys do as well as the girls but, overall, the progress of Asian Pakistanis is not as good as other groups. The school is working on strategies to address this, including working with parents.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to develop a systematic self-evaluation process to ensure the subject leader knows accurately the strengths and areas to develop across the whole school
- to share the best practice in teaching and learning
- to rationalise assessment and target-setting systems, ensuring pupils are given greater responsibility for 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

Andrew Olive
Her Majesty's Inspector