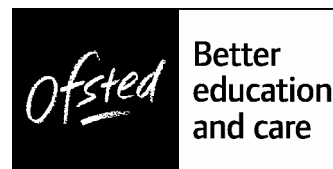


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Mr R Steward  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Steward

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 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 is satisfactory.

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies, but is usually within the average range.
- Standards in National Curriculum tests are average and so were the standards of pupils' work observed during the inspection. However, number skills are weak. Too few pupils had instant recall of basic number facts and this affected their ability to learn more.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and show positive attitudes. They work together well in groups or pairs.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Good relationships between teachers and pupils are evident in lessons and a positive learning atmosphere is maintained.
- In the best lessons, tasks are particularly well matched to pupils' needs. These lessons also focus clearly on generating understanding, for example, when pupils learned about ordering decimals, practical equipment was used well to show the reason why, for example, 1.16 is smaller than 1.6.
- Scrutiny of pupils' completed work shows that teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough; some work is too easy.
- In some lessons, opportunities are missed to use practical methods to generate understanding.
- All classrooms display hierarchical targets for groups of pupils and these are sometimes noted in planning, but pupils were unsure of their relevance.
- Long-term tracking is being developed to give earlier feedback on progress to staff and pupils. Analyses of pupils' responses to individual test questions are being used effectively to identify weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding and to guide subsequent planning.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The scheme of work is based on the methods of the Primary National Strategy and ensures that pupils meet progressively harder work.
- The school is now using more 'catch-up' programmes effectively; good support for these pupils from teaching assistants was observed.
- Clear analyses of test papers have resulted in an appropriate focus on problem solving.
- Completed work shows little use of information and communication technology or practical and investigative methods.
- Links with other subjects to reinforce mathematical learning and understanding are underdeveloped.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- Satisfactory leadership and management has been a factor in maintaining standards in line with national averages.
- The subject leader has a clear understanding of the issues facing the school regarding mathematics. However, where areas of concern are identified, they are not always followed up rigorously enough to diagnose the specific weakness.

- Evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in completed tests and assessments are used to inform teaching and the subject action plan. The plan is sound although priorities could be more sharply focused, and measures of success more clearly defined.
- Monitoring and evaluation takes place mainly through assessments and completed work; checking of planning before lessons take place is not carried out to ensure that pupils receive the right diet in lessons.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Good relationships in lessons help to promote enjoyment. Pupils say they particularly enjoy the use of games that reinforce their understanding. In some lessons, practical apparatus is used well to generate understanding, but this is not consistent – in other lessons, rote learning gets in the way of a secure understanding of the basic concepts.

Inclusion

The school is satisfactorily inclusive. Teaching groups are formed on the basis of pupils' prior attainment and this assists teachers when matching tasks more closely to pupils' needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are taught in smaller groups with additional support to help them make satisfactory progress based on their individual targets.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that there is a clearer and more consistent focus on pupils' understanding in lessons
- make better use of hierarchical targets to enable pupils to know how well they are doing and what to do to improve
- audit the use of mathematics in other subjects to derive close links and reinforce learning
- make sharper and more focused use of monitoring activities to diagnose reasons for any underachievement identified.

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