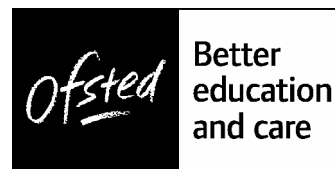


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Mr P Sherwin  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Sherwin

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 and 21 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 nine lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding.

- Standards are consistently excellent in both key stages.
- Pupils enter the school having achieved above-average standards at primary school. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress to achieve exceptionally high standards in national tests and examinations.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils work industriously in lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are outstanding.

- The well qualified staff have very high expectations of what pupils should be able to do and how they should behave, to which pupils readily respond. Teachers pay rigorous attention to the correct use of mathematical language and presentation.
- Questioning is used skilfully by teachers to ensure that pupils understand what they are learning. This is also true when teachers and teaching assistants work with individual pupils to deal with uncertainty or misunderstanding.
- Lessons proceed at a brisk pace; time is used very effectively.
- Many pupils take the opportunity to opt for more challenging work when they feel confident enough.
- There is some scope to increase opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their own learning, to display independence and to engage in dialogue about their work, for example, in whole-class sessions at the end of lessons.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum offered is good.

- Schemes of work, especially in Key Stage 3, are thorough and ensure that pupils meet gradually more challenging work as they progress through the school.
- Good opportunities are identified to incorporate practical and investigative activities, and to use information and communication technology to support learning.
- Schemes in Key Stage 4 are being revised and do not yet include enough guidance for teachers.
- There is limited emphasis on ensuring that pupils have opportunities to be actively involved in their own learning.
- Some links are made with other subjects to reinforce the learning of mathematics but this is not consistent.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The subject leader has successfully engendered a spirit of teamwork within the department, with a strong ethos of mutual trust and support.
- She has rigorous expectations of the team to which they respond well. This has resulted in the consistently high quality of teaching and learning and the strong track record of high standards.
- The strengths and areas for development are grounded in accurate, but informal, self-evaluation that is based on the outcomes of regular assessments.

### Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils say that the subjects they enjoy most are those that are 'hands on', and that mathematics does not fall into this category. This is confirmed by observations of lessons, in which pupils were frequently hard-working but passive learners. However, pupils were also clear that staff work very hard to ensure they understand

work within lessons that have rigorous expectations and a brisk pace to learning. They agree that they rarely leave a lesson without understanding the work because teachers give clear explanations and plenty of practice, and are willing to go over it again should the need arise. Pupils enjoy using methods and activities of the type promoted by the Secondary National Strategy and designed to increase pupils' involvement and understanding but these are not used consistently in all classrooms.

## Inclusion

The subject is outstandingly inclusive. Lessons are well planned with appropriate challenge for all. The provision of harder questions that pupils attempt when they feel confident generates self-esteem and is a factor in the outstanding achievement. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively in lessons to make rapid progress in the subject and towards their own targets for improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

Increase pupils' enjoyment of mathematics by:

- incorporating more opportunities for pupils to learn actively through practical and investigative tasks and increasing opportunities for discussion in pairs and groups
- ensuring that pupils know exactly how well they are doing, can gauge their own performance and understand what they need to do to improve further.

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