

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Hilary Jackson
Headteacher
Blessed Robert Widmerpool Catholic Primary School
Listowel Crescent
Clifton
Nottingham
NG11 9BH

Dear Mrs Jackson

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 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 parts of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject, mathematics, was judged to be good with some outstanding features, particularly in helping pupils to understand mathematical ideas.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Children achieve well during the Foundation Stage. From a low base they make good progress in gaining early mathematical ideas.
- As they enter Year 1, pupils have knowledge and skills that are below those typical of children nationally. They make good progress in all years, so that standards are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6.

- Recent results in national tests at the end of Year 6 indicate that the pupils concerned achieved exceptionally well.
- Pupils gain a good understanding of mathematical ideas alongside the acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons; they like being challenged and they are very keen to do well. They are supportive of each other's efforts.
- Pupils are confident to talk about their mathematics; they are willing to take risks mathematically, try out new ideas and explain their methods and their thinking.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- All pupils make at least good progress because teachers pay careful attention to the needs of each individual. Teachers use their assessments of how well pupils are doing to plan activities that provide good levels of challenge for all.
- Teachers enable pupils to develop good language skills in mathematics. Their questioning encourages pupils to explain their thinking and reasoning, thus aiding their understanding of mathematical ideas. Occasionally, when asking really challenging questions, teachers do not wait long enough for responses and this limits the potential for the most able pupils to be stretched.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support pupils.
- Pupils appreciate the good guidance they receive from teachers, both orally and through marking, about how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Pupils are becoming skilled at assessing how well they are doing. They can identify where they have been successful and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- There is a good balance between the different aspects of the subject.
- Teachers ensure that pupils' capabilities in using and applying mathematics are being developed. This is done by providing pupils with a range of activities that promote this, and by skilfully asking questions.
- Effective steps have been taken to provide pupils with an understanding of the use of information and communication technology in mathematics.
- Good links are made between mathematics and other subjects and this helps pupils to appreciate the place and importance of mathematics in everyday life.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- A clear direction for the development of mathematics has been at the heart of the steady improvements made over several years.
- The school's self-evaluation of its work in mathematics, based on a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation, is accurate.

- Policies and schemes of work are thorough, clear and helpful in promoting and guiding good practice.
- Very good use is made of the resources. Good deployment of teaching assistants ensures that the work of teachers is augmented well, to the benefit of pupils.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Teachers make lessons stimulating and hence pupils enjoy their mathematics. Pupils work very well together, in pairs and in small groups, and try to help one another whenever they can. A range of activities that encourage pupils to try out ideas improves their ability in using and applying mathematics. Teachers ask challenging questions and then listen carefully to pupils' answers, so that they can ask pertinent follow-up questions. This helps pupils to develop their thinking and reasoning skills and enables them to explain their mathematics accurately and with confidence. In turn this enables them to develop an understanding of mathematical ideas. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate how well they are doing and this also helps them gain an improving understanding of the topics they are studying.

Inclusion

The school has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and access to all that it provides. Care is taken to ensure that pupils of all abilities make at least good progress. Occasionally the most able are not challenged sufficiently for them to reach their potential. Boys and girls do equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well in class, both through carefully planned activities and by the support of teaching assistants. Good attention is paid to the needs of the increasing numbers of pupils joining the school for whom English is an additional language. These pupils are integrated well into class activities and are making similar rates of progress and achieving as well as others in their classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that the most able pupils are challenged to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.

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

George Knights
Additional Inspector