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Mrs C Bradford  
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Dear Mrs Bradford

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 22 and 23 January 2007 with my colleague, Stephen Abbott HMI, 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 14 lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils' attainment on entry is well below average. Over the past three years standards have improved but are still below national average. Progress at ages 14 and 16 was satisfactory in 2005 and improved in 2006.
- Classwork in mathematics in Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory, especially in the higher ability sets.
- At Key Stage 4 in 2005, least progress was made by pupils who were neither the most able, nor those with statements of learning difficulties and disabilities. The school was aware of this, responded by targeted intervention "to the middle", and in 2006 the situation improved.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Most lessons observed were judged to be satisfactory or good. Progress in a minority of lessons was inadequate because of disruptive behaviour by some pupils.
- Teachers plan well and each lesson has clear aims and a structure that is shared with the class. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively and make good use of a range of visual materials to enable pupils to make progress. However, during our visit, we observed pupils using ICT in only one mathematics lesson.
- In the most effective lessons, unobtrusive and highly effective behaviour management ensures a calm atmosphere in which learning can take place. Informal assessment of small groups and individuals successfully enables teachers to monitor pupils' progress and understanding.
- The quality of oral responses to questions was best in Year 7 and 11 lessons. In some Year 8 and 9 lessons, the poor communication skills of the pupils hindered discussion of mathematical ideas.
- Marking and written feedback is inconsistent.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Curriculum organisation is good and considerable progress has been made with schemes of work and a common assessment system.
- The match of course content in each key stage to pupils' prior attainment is good.
- The impact of intervention is good and has been successful in raising standards.
- Some pupils have been entered for adult numeracy qualifications or entry level qualifications in addition to GCSE.
- There is little explicit work on numeracy across the curriculum and, although ICT is mentioned in schemes of work, pupils have few opportunities to use their ICT skills in mathematics.
- A new integrated curriculum in Year 7 is part way through the first year of operation. This aims to increase pupils' independence and confidence in learning and includes numeracy across the curriculum.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The mathematics faculty is well managed and organised. The head of faculty and deputy head teacher are very experienced and act as good role models for less experienced teachers.

- Over the past three years, pupils' attainment and progress has improved at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. There have been a number of curriculum innovations aimed at raising achievement at both key stages.
- However, ICT activities for pupils in the classroom are insufficiently developed.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Most pupils get their enjoyment of mathematics from their success in key stage tests and GCSEs. In discussion, pupils said that the teachers were supportive and gave them extra help if they did not understand a topic. Year 7 and 11 pupils showed the most engagement in lessons. In addition, the most able pupils showed the most enjoyment of the challenge in mathematics lessons.

### Inclusion

Intervention work takes place across the key stages to support pupils and to raise standards. Vulnerable pupils are accurately identified and supported. Overall boys achieve as well as girls in Key Stage 3 tests and at GCSE.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increase the use of ICT by pupils in lessons
- improve the consistency of marking and written feedback
- eliminate the small proportion of disruptive behaviour that adversely affects some 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Alex Falconer  
Her Majesty's Inspector