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Ms Nicola Mardlin
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Dear Ms Mardlin

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 Steve Abbott HMI on 25 January 2007 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 10 lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards in national assessments at the end of Year 2 and tests at the end of Year 6 are average. However, lower-attaining pupils did particularly well in the most recent Year 6 tests.
- Pupils currently in the school are making satisfactory progress, with children in the Foundation Stage making much better progress than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are helped to make sound progress.

- Achievement is better in the acquisition of knowledge and skills than in developing mathematical thinking and reasoning skills and in understanding mathematical ideas.
- Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and behave well in them.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to work in groups or to develop their independent study skills.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers help pupils to acquire a good range of knowledge and skills but they are less successful in enabling pupils to develop their mathematical thinking.
- Some teachers are good at matching work to the needs of individuals but in some lessons the most able are not stretched enough.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together, particularly when supporting deaf pupils, who are integrated into lessons well.
- Teachers use their day-to-day assessment of pupils' work well and encourage pupils to develop their skills in self-assessment of their work. However, not enough use is made of the analysis of longer-term assessment information to guide teachers' planning.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- Good progress has been made since the previous inspection to improve the range of work covered in mathematics, with significant improvements in work on shape and space and recent improvements in teaching data handling.
- Teachers from the neighbouring secondary school provide regular enrichment sessions in which the most able pupils are stretched and challenged.
- The subject scheme of work does not provide teachers with enough guidance on how to modify work for groups of different ability. Nor does it guide teachers on how to develop pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology in their mathematics lessons.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- Leadership and management of the subject are improving, with the coordinator having an increasingly effective role in supporting other teachers.
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of teachers is not currently rigorous or extensive enough to identify the best practice that could be shared or to identify where improvements are needed.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils enjoy their mathematics, especially when they are challenged to do well. Some teachers are adept at modifying activities in response to pupils' needs and pupils value this. Many teachers encourage pupils to explain their methods and this helps raise pupils' confidence and improve their understanding. However, this does not happen in all classrooms. Pupils are better at learning skills and routines than they are in developing an understanding of mathematical ideas. This is because teachers have not given enough attention to developing this aspect of the curriculum. Some attention is given to problem-solving, but pupils need more opportunities to work on activities that promote their mathematical thinking.

Inclusion

Careful attention is paid to ensuring that all pupils are able to participate in mathematical lessons. This is illustrated well in the support given to deaf pupils by teachers and teaching assistants working well together. The grouping of pupils by ability from Year 2 upwards helps teachers match work to the needs of individuals, though some teachers require more guidance in how to do this successfully. Good progress by lower-achieving pupils suggests that work is matched better to their needs than it is to the more able pupils in the school. The most able pupils are, however, stretched and challenged well in the enrichment sessions.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- make better use of analysis of assessment data to guide teachers' work
- extend and bring more rigour to the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice in order to improve teaching and learning still further
- modify activities in order to improve pupils' abilities in understanding mathematical ideas and their skills in using and applying mathematics.

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