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2 February 2007

Mrs C Padgett
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Dear Mrs Padgett

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 1 February 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 six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Standards are above average on entry and throughout the school. Pupils of all abilities achieve well and make good progress. They are avid learners who gain pleasure and satisfaction from their own success.
- Pupils are confident, articulate and knowledgeable. They absorb and utilise knowledge gained from a wide variety of sources, in and out of the classroom, to add depth and purpose to their understanding of mathematics.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally well because the school provides subtle, well-directed support exactly where it is needed.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers have high expectations. Some exemplary teaching was observed; for example, in Year 6, quick-fire, open-ended questioning forced pupils to consider and evaluate alternative routes to solving problems.
- Classwork is backed up by good quality homework that reinforces learning and makes demands on pupils' initiative. It provides valuable information that influences teachers' planning for subsequent lessons.
- The school explores and uses a wide variety of strategies to support and boost learning, such as the short-term computer courses for those pupils who lack confidence in applying basic number concepts. These are very successful because pupils work at their own speed and rise to the challenge of improving their assessment at the end of each module.
- Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The work is carefully structured to align with that of the class so pupils are fully integrated into all aspects of the curriculum and activities.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is vibrant. Good planning for interaction between subjects enhances pupils' experiences and learning.
- Resources are plentiful and well maintained. They are used well to provide a practical and meaningful base for learning.
- The curriculum in the Reception class is very effective; it is well structured around play and practical activities. Planning for continuous provision in the Foundation Stage and Year1 establishes a good bridge between the two classes, particularly for the younger children who spend only one term in the Reception class.
- Information and communication technology is well established as a powerful vehicle for learning.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Every aspect of provision for mathematics has been built up thoughtfully since the school opened five years ago with just 50 pupils. Currently, there are approximately 200 pupils on roll. The school is oversubscribed. Strategic development of the curriculum and teaching practices has led to pupils' good achievement throughout the school.
- The tracking of pupils' progress over time has created some difficulties because the vast majority of pupils have been at the school for only part of their education. The school is aware that assessment of pupils' standards at seven, measured against those expected for their age, is not accurate enough.

- Collaborative leadership between senior managers and the subject leader has accurately identified what needs to be done next to sustain and further improve the already good standards.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils enjoy mathematics. Their articulate use of technical language enables them to express themselves clearly so it is easy for teachers to detect and correct illogical conclusions. The solution of problems written in words is integral to planning in all year groups, which builds up pupils' confidence in translating them to numerical calculations. The extension of this type of work to investigative mathematics is less consistent. Where it is used, such as the Year 4 lesson that was observed, pupils were excited and competitive. The freedom to sound out and challenge other pupils made them think critically to justify their decisions.

Inclusion

Good relationships between pupils and adults foster a climate in which pupils want to learn. Pupils are active from the moment they arrive at school. By interacting so well, and not just with those in their own class, they form a homogeneous community where everyone is valued for their particular contribution. This underpins all aspects of the school's work and is the underlying reason for the good achievement of pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. There is a real sense of partnership that extends to parents and beyond.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending planning in all classes to include regular and explicit provision for investigative work
- establishing accurate assessment of standards in Year 2 based on the criteria for National Curriculum levels.

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

June Tracey
Additional Inspector