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06 February 2007

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Dear Miss Underwood

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 Gill Close HMI on 5 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 twelve parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Standards have improved significantly over the past three years and are now broadly average in Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils have made good progress since joining the school.
- The pupils who took the Year 6 national tests in 2005 and 2006 made outstanding progress in Key Stage 2.
- Well-targeted support has enabled pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and statements of special educational need to make very good progress.

- Pupils participate in lessons with enthusiasm and work well collaboratively. They are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets or reviewing their progress towards them.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Flexible groupings and setting arrangements enable teachers to plan work that matches pupils' differing needs and capabilities.
- Teachers take care to set mathematical problems in the context of real-life situations that are interesting and relevant to the pupils.
- Pupils are taught and encouraged to use correct mathematical vocabulary when explaining their methods.
- A few teachers do not always ensure that pupils have a sufficiently thorough understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Work is marked regularly but marking does not always show pupils how to improve their work or give them opportunities to address misconceptions.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Regular assessments and careful tracking of pupils' progress feed into the planning for different groups of pupils to ensure that their widely varying needs are met.
- There is clear guidance for teachers, for example in the calculations policy and the teaching of mathematical vocabulary.
- There are effective additional support programmes for pupils who are approaching national assessments, such as the mathematics and information and communication technology clubs for pupils in Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop problem-solving approaches independently.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Regular observations of teaching and learning and detailed analysis of assessment data give senior managers a clear view of strengths and areas where improvement is needed.
- The subject manager provides good leadership and effective support for colleagues in developing their own skills and understanding.
- The school makes very good use of an external mathematics consultant to support the development of the subject.
- The systems for tracking and recording pupils' progress do not give a clear enough overview of pupils' progress throughout each year, especially from Nursery to Year 2.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils clearly enjoy mathematics and contribute to lessons with energy and enthusiasm. They are given plenty of opportunities to solve problems that are related to familiar everyday situations. This motivates them and makes learning relevant and interesting. Pupils are encouraged to explain how they would tackle a problem, but do not always have enough opportunity to use their initiative and work out their own strategies. They do not always fully understand the concepts that underpin their mathematical knowledge and sometimes are unable to explain how they arrive at a solution.

Inclusion

This is an outstanding aspect of the school's provision. Pupils from the Language Opportunity Base and others with learning difficulties are provided for very well, and are included in mathematics groups alongside their peers. They make very good progress because of the high quality support and teaching they receive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- a greater focus on ensuring pupils' understanding of key concepts
- involving pupils more actively in setting their own targets and assessing their progress towards them
- monitoring more closely the progress of pupils throughout each year from Nursery onwards.

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

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector