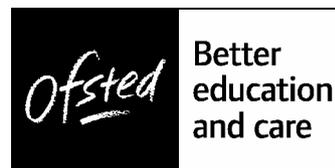


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09 February 2007

Miss Linda Taylor
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Taylor

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 7 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 parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and reach above average standards by the end of the Reception Year. They build effectively on this good progress in Key Stage 1 so that standards are substantially higher than the national average by Year 2.
- Standards in Year 6 have returned to their former above average level, after a period of decline during which a number of pupils did not make enough progress, particularly when they were in Years 3 and 4. Pupils are now making good progress throughout Key Stage 2 because the school has successfully remedied the weaknesses in teaching that it identified.

- Pupils are enthusiastic, apply themselves well to learning and are able to explain their methods and reasoning clearly and systematically.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Mathematical development in the Foundation Stage is very well planned. The teacher and assistants develop children's learning very effectively through role play, practical activities and careful questioning.
- There are good opportunities for all pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding in real-life situations.
- Teachers ensure that pupils fully grasp what they are expected to learn and check their understanding as the lesson progresses.
- Pupils know their individual targets and are involved effectively in assessing their own progress.
- Teachers make good use of assessment information when planning activities for different groups of pupils. This ensures that each lesson builds well on what pupils already know as well as tackling any gaps in their understanding.
- Some teachers' marking clearly shows pupils the next steps in learning and helps to explain misconceptions but this is not done consistently well in every class.
- Occasionally, teachers are too quick to give explanations and correct misconceptions instead of asking the pupils to think for themselves.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The school has developed a successful flexible approach to planning which is responsive to pupils' needs and their rates of progress. This sometimes entails extending the time spent on a topic to ensure pupils have thoroughly understood it before moving on to a new area of work.
- There is a strong emphasis on giving pupils opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and to develop independent thinking skills.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to use and extend their mathematical skills in other subjects, such as making graphs in geography, exploring shape and pattern in art, and taking measurements in science.
- Occasional over-reliance on commercial worksheets in lower Key Stage 2 classes limits opportunities for independent learning.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The co-ordinator provides clear direction for the continuing development of mathematics teaching throughout the school.

- Thorough monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and analysis of pupils' performance have led to improvements that are helping pupils to make faster and more consistent progress in Key Stage 2.
- Feedback provided to teachers helps them to improve their practice.
- You have rightly identified the need to assess and record pupils' progress more frequently in order to identify signs of underachievement at an earlier stage than has been the case in the past. The new systems that have been introduced give senior managers a clearer picture of the impact of teaching and learning on pupils' achievement each term but have not yet made a significant difference to the school's overall performance.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils thoroughly enjoy mathematics lessons. They are enthusiastic and well motivated learners. They are given plenty of opportunities to solve 'real-life' problems that are relevant and interesting to them. On a few occasions, pupils are not encouraged to think things through sufficiently because teachers provide explanations too readily.

Inclusion

Pupils with learning difficulties do better than similar pupils nationally due to well-planned support and intervention. Girls and boys achieve equally well and are well-motivated to learn. Inequalities in provision which resulted in slower progress for pupils in Key Stage 2 in the past have been ironed out. The quality of teaching and learning is now more consistent throughout the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building upon the good practice that is now being shared and embedded to ensure consistently good progress throughout Years 3 to 6
- ensuring careful tracking of individual pupils' progress throughout each year and taking prompt action to tackle early signs of underachievement
- making sure that teachers' marking shows pupils the next steps in 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector