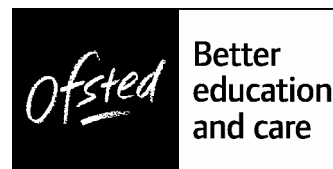


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Mr G Drew  
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Dear Mr Drew

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 Ian Knight, Additional Inspector, on 21-22 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of 15 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Standards at GCSE and in National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students are high. Students' achievement is outstanding and consistently improving. Students make excellent progress in all years.
- Well targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants enables students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make excellent progress.
- Achievement is outstanding post-16. Results at both AS and A-level are high.
- Most students enjoy mathematics and behave very well. Many are enthusiastic and appreciate the support they receive from teachers.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- There is some outstanding teaching, with students engaged in a variety of activities. For example, Year 9 students acted as 'small particles with brains' to generate an understanding of loci whilst, in Year 7, students collaborated in groups to calculate the best value of discounted articles of clothing scattered round the room.
- The quality of most teaching and learning is good and improving. The department has developed effective strategies that ensure students achieve well in examinations, but recognises some teaching is insufficiently inspiring.
- Some good use is made of collaborative activities, with students effectively encouraged to discuss and explain their reasoning. Some lively presentations demonstrate clearly the applications of mathematics. However, lesson endings sometimes fail to consolidate effectively what has been learnt.
- Computer-linked whiteboards are being used increasingly effectively to support teaching, but are not available in all rooms.
- Assessment procedures are very good. Careful tracking of progress, target setting, students' self-evaluation and appropriate intervention strategies have helped raise achievement. Teachers' marking is thorough, with some clear guidance to students on what to do to improve.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The current schemes of work are sound, with appropriate references to using and applying mathematics, but are constrained by being closely linked to following a prescribed text. To address this, the department is developing an outstanding interactive scheme which references a variety of activities to teach each topic, including video clips and exemplar lesson plans.
- Activities using information and communication technology (ICT) are included in all schemes of work, but students indicate limited experience of them. Planned acquisition of a set of laptops should enhance opportunities to use ICT.
- Good provision is being made to broaden the mathematics curriculum with the introduction of statistics in Years 10 and 11 and the planned introduction of further mathematics post-16.
- Good programmes of enrichment and targeted intervention help ensure effective support for students of all abilities.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- Outstanding leadership and management have provided a clear direction for development focused on raising attainment and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- Departmental self-evaluation and development planning is rigorous, with all staff involved in initiatives, such as the interactive schemes of work. There is an excellent team ethos.
- Tracking of students' progress is becoming increasingly sophisticated in its use of ICT to analyse data and provide students with targets for improvement.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Most students enjoy mathematics, particularly 'if we do well in it.' They appreciate the range of opportunities they are given and the efforts of teachers to make topics interesting. They like having to explain their reasoning as 'it builds up our confidence.' They appreciate opportunities to work together and enjoy being challenged. However, they recognise where teaching is weaker when it fails to develop fully their understanding of a topic.

Inclusion

Good support in lessons and teachers' willingness to provide additional help outside lessons ensures students' outstanding achievement. Grouping students by ability is used effectively, but activities in some lessons do not address fully the range of abilities within the class.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- encourage all teachers to broaden their repertoire of teaching strategies to include a greater variety of stimulating activities which help develop students' understanding, as occurs in the best practice within the department
- continue to develop and implement the interactive schemes of work ensuring all students make appropriate use of ICT within 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

David Bain  
Additional Inspector