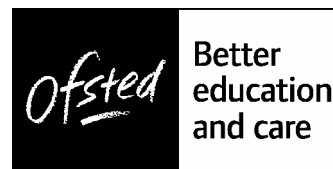


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



15 March 2007

Mrs Wendy Skinner
Headteacher
St Mark's CE Primary School
Eccles Row
Eccles
Kent
ME20 7HS

Dear Mrs Skinner

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 March 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 in each of the five classes.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress in recognising numbers and making calculations. They do less well in learning about shape, space and measures, partly because of limited language skills. Standards overall are broadly in line with national expectations.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school. There have been variations in the results of national tests from year to year due to the small numbers of pupils involved, but overall standards are above average in Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils' progress through Key Stage 2 has been uneven in the past, due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Better teaching and more

careful tracking of individual pupils' progress are helping to eradicate these inconsistencies.

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and use their mathematical skills well in many areas of school life. For example, older pupils work out costings for new playtime resources, tabulate results on Sports Day and collect data about the 'Walking Bus' scheme.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Mathematical development in the Foundation Stage is well planned. There is a particularly good focus on developing mathematical language through role play, practical activities and careful questioning.
- Pupils often discuss ideas with a partner and this helps to extend their understanding of mathematical language and concepts.
- Teachers use a very good variety of methods and strategies, with a strong emphasis on visual and practical activities. This enables pupils to learn in a way that suits them best.
- Thorough assessment procedures in all classes give teachers a clear picture of individual pupils' progress. This information is used well to pitch work at the right level for each pupil.
- Teachers' marking is helpful and constructive. It shows pupils what they need to do to move on to the next stage in their learning.
- Occasionally, when groups of pupils are working independently, teachers do not check often enough to ensure that they have fully understood their task.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is planned effectively to ensure that activities and resources are well matched to the needs of individual pupils in each class.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' learning.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge of numbers, calculations and data to solve problems. Opportunities for using and applying their knowledge of shapes, space and measures are less well developed.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The two subject leaders have carried out a thorough evaluation of mathematics provision and have identified the right priorities for its future development throughout the school.
- They are good practitioners who lead by example and provide valuable support for less-experienced colleagues.

- Your own monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is rigorous. Subsequent observations show that teachers have learned from and acted upon the points for improvement.
- The arrangements for tracking individual pupils' progress have improved significantly over the past two years but are still not yet fully effective in ensuring that all pupils are making the best possible progress throughout each year.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils are enthusiastic and well-motivated learners. They thoroughly enjoy mathematics lessons. Younger pupils particularly enjoy practical activities. Older pupils think problems through carefully before working out which strategies to use in order to solve them. Pupils have a good understanding of their learning targets and know what they need to do to achieve them. Year 6 pupils are particularly good at explaining their reasoning and what steps they have followed to solve a problem.

Inclusion

Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because they receive well-targeted support. Girls and boys achieve equally well and are motivated to learn. There are no variations in achievement between pupils of different ethnicity.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- refining the systems for tracking individual pupils' progress throughout each year and ensuring all are making sufficient progress towards their targets
- developing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge of shapes, space and measures in problem-solving situations.

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