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Mr P Barnett
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Dear Mr Barnett

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 May 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. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform Ofsted's Curriculum and Dissemination Division of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

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 three lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good. Standards are above average.

- There are only 44 pupils in the school so very small cohorts in Years 2 and 6 make year-on-year comparisons unreliable. Generally though, pupils make good progress to achieve above average standards by the time they leave school. Boys, who account for two thirds of the pupils in the school, make better progress than girls.
- Pupils know their targets which are shared with parents so that they are able to see the progress their children are making towards achieving them.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their work in mathematics and particularly enjoy tasks which allow them to investigate mathematics and are challenging. They

also appreciate teachers explaining not only what they are learning but also why they are learning it. They say this helps them understand the work better.

- The strong emphasis on developing reasoning and improving communication within mathematics makes a good contribution towards developing important skills for the future.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils and they know them well. Although pupils are generally taught in two mixed-age classes, in mathematics they are taught in three different groups well matched to their levels of attainment rather than ages. When pupils need additional support for a topic they often move groups for a short time so that they can make rapid progress.
- Play is incorporated well into the planning and teaching for younger children so that they are able to acquire mathematical skills through well focused activities.
- Teachers' skilful use of challenging and open-ended questions provides pupils with opportunities to develop good reasoning and communication skills.
- Teachers have a good overview of the levels at which pupils are working and work is matched closely to their needs. Teachers assess work well and help pupils to overcome problems. However this help is not always recorded in pupils' books and so pupils can not refer to it later.
- Teachers share learning objectives effectively with pupils, sometimes by getting them to explain what they mean to partners. They review them at the end of lessons to consolidate learning.
- Very good use is made of teaching assistants to enhance the work of teachers.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The school has developed good schemes of work, based on the Primary National Strategy materials, which match the needs of the wide range of ages and abilities within teaching groups.
- Effective use is made of whiteboards. The pupils say they enjoy using them during lessons.
- Teachers choose a good range of tasks to involve pupils in using and applying their mathematics, focusing particularly on reasoning and communicating. However, these elements are not always identified within planning and so it is not always possible to see how pupils progress.
- Very close liaison with the pre-school unit, which is on the same site, enhances pupils' effective transfer into the school.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The small-school ethos ensures very close work between all staff and allows you, as subject leader and headteacher, to have a very clear overview of what is happening and how the subject is developing.
- Staff support each other well, although they have had limited opportunities to observe each other teach.
- The commitment to ensuring that pupils understand their work is clear. The steer you give is effective in ensuring all pupils receive a rich programme of mathematics. Severe time constraints mean that formal monitoring of lessons does not happen as often as you would like.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils enjoy mathematics; they respond well to good teaching and have excellent relationships with their teachers. Questioning is used well to engage pupils who said that they enjoy lessons that involve them in investigating problems. They also commented that teachers help them understand the work by explaining what to do and why to do it. They felt that because most of the work had a reason for completion, it helped them make sense of what they were asked to do and consequently to understand and learn.

Inclusion

The school overcomes the problems of mixed-age classes very well so that the work is closely matched to pupils' levels and they are able to make good progress. Very effective use is made of teaching assistants to ensure all pupils work well during lessons. Additional support is used well to help pupils overcome gaps in their knowledge so that they are then able to work alongside their peers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introducing greater challenge in the targets set for pupils
- increasing the rate of progress of girls to at least match that of boys
- raising the quality of written feedback so that it better informs pupils on how to improve.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector