

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Ms Healey  
Headteacher  
Birches Head High School  
Birches Head Road  
Hanley  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST2 8DD

Dear Ms Healey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Evaluation of the Primary and Secondary National Strategies

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit 12 - 13 June 2007 to look at work in the Secondary National Strategy (SNS).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the National Strategies, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of Assessment for learning (AfL).

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, and observation from eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of provision in mathematics was judged to be satisfactory.

#### Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. The impact of AfL on achievement is satisfactory.

- Standards of attainment are broadly average in both key stages although they are rising.
- Progress in both key stages is satisfactory and improving.

- Students' progress in the lessons observed was satisfactory.
- The majority of students have positive attitudes about mathematics, although a minority dislike the lack of continuity in teaching caused by staffing difficulties.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The impact of AfL on teaching and learning is also satisfactory.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge helps them to anticipate the misconceptions that are likely to occur.
- Teachers consistently share lesson objectives and intended outcomes with pupils.
- Students enjoy reflecting on what they have learned but they do not have enough opportunities to explain how they have achieved specific outcomes.
- Although shared misconceptions are considered, mathematical concepts are not sufficiently explored.
- A wide variety of questioning is used, including partner work, to increase communication and participation but there are relatively few opportunities for students to raise their own questions.
- The pilot 'building learning behaviour' programme has been effective in promoting speaking and listening.
- Marking is sound and feedback is provided to students on effort and achievement. Most students are aware of their longer term targets but are less certain about the shorter term steps. The learning, target and strategy approach to marking is not used consistently.
- Peer and self assessment is underdeveloped. Occasionally there are opportunities for students to evaluate work using set criteria, for instance when reviewing test papers.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The implementation of AfL on the curriculum is satisfactory.

- A strong feature of the curriculum is the emphasis given to students' social and personal development. Relationships are good and students are developing improved learning skills.
- Numeracy across the curriculum is at an early stage of development. The school has made this a priority for development.
- The curriculum does not sufficiently require the application of mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 3.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- You are transforming the culture and ethos of the school.
- The senior leadership team ensures that subject leaders are held to account for learning and achievement.
- National strategy materials are used extensively to improve learning.
- Significant consultant support has been employed to address weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- The new head of mathematics sets a good example of the practice required to improve mathematics.

## Assessment for learning

The impact of AfL overall is satisfactory.

- Staffing difficulties have delayed the impact of AfL on students' progress and standards.
- Good management at a senior level has resulted in the satisfactory implementation of AfL in mathematics.
- Teachers adjust lessons effectively to meet the needs of learners.
- Students are not yet involved consistently in peer and self assessment.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good. The impact of AfL on inclusion is good.

- All students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory progress.
- Individual learning plans are used well and students receive three different levels of support, according to need.
- Students' progress is carefully tracked and support programmes are implemented appropriately.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing further students' assessment of their own work
- developing a curriculum that emphasises application and increases opportunities to explore mathematical concepts.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics and assessment for learning in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

Kevin Sheldrick  
Her Majesty's Inspector