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Mrs E Jones
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Dear Mrs Jones

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 2 July 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.

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 four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children join the school with broadly the expected levels of skills and understanding. During their time in Reception, they make good progress and reach standards that are higher than national expectations as they join Year 1. These children achieve well.
- During Key Stage 1, good progress continues and by the end of Year 2, standards are well above average.
- Progress is not as rapid in Key Stage 2 except in Year 6 where pupils are benefiting greatly from lively teaching. Past staffing instability has had an impact on the standards reached by pupils in Year 6, which are broadly average. Overall, achievement in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy lessons very much when they are lively, engaging and include real-world contexts. Behaviour is very good. Pupils seize the many opportunities provided to work collaboratively.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teaching is good overall because of the consistency of approach throughout much of the school. The good progress throughout Reception and Key Stage 1 is founded on the extension of the philosophy and methodology of Reception into Key Stage 1. However, in some Key Stage 2 classes, activities remain too formal and abstract and this restricts the progress pupils can make.
- Genuine real-life contexts are used well to generate interesting practical activities, for example, when pupils in Year 6 undertook a 'Dragon's Den' activity to try to persuade governors to fund projects. This cross-curricular activity involved close teamwork and lots of mathematical skills as pupils sought to present their costs and predicted benefits to a panel of adults. Several of their schemes are now coming to fruition.
- Teachers plan tasks well that engage and challenge pupils at the right level for them, enhancing their progress. Together with the positive relationships that enable teachers' discreet management of behaviour, these maintain a brisk pace to learning.
- Pupils do not always know how well they are doing or how to improve because the marking of completed work and the setting and reviewing of individual targets vary in quality.

Quality of the curriculum

The mathematics curriculum offered by the school is good.

- The school has improved the curriculum it offers in a number of ways. Methods and planning used in Reception have been extended through most of Key Stage 1 and, to a lesser extent, Key Stage 2 and are having a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- The curriculum includes a clear emphasis on active learning and making mental mathematics activities fun. To this end, the daily mental mathematics session has been separated from the main numeracy lesson to increase the 'fun' element and to increase the time that pupils are actively involved in their learning.
- The school is increasing the number of activities based on real-life problems to be solved. These include the use of information and communication technology (ICT), practical and investigative methods.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- You are currently co-ordinating mathematics. The improving picture stems from a shared understanding of the nature of mathematics and mathematical thought.

This is resulting in a clear direction for the subject that focuses on practical and investigative methods, problem solving and the use of ICT.

- The approach adopted throughout the school is becoming increasingly consistent. High expectations for all are being generated and checked on by accurate and incisive monitoring of the school's work. Pupils in need of a boost are identified early by staff through the school's accurate tracking systems.
- The school has coped with considerable instability in staffing recently, which has particularly affected the standards reached in Year 6. You have focused on this and successfully ensured that these pupils are catching up.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils were in agreement that they enjoy mathematics lessons. Lesson observations during the inspection support this, including lessons where they worked collaboratively and independently to complete their tasks. The main reasons for their enjoyment are lessons that are exciting and fast-moving and include genuine real-world contexts. These features also serve to generate real understanding of the underlying principles.

Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good. Planning includes clear variations in tasks to ensure that all in the class are challenged at the right level; increasingly, this is supporting the progress of the most capable. The weaker pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively by well-deployed teaching assistants. The consistency of approach throughout the school is increasingly ensuring that all pupils have the same access to good quality teaching, rooted in problem solving and real-world contexts.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the consistency of teaching so that all comes up to the quality of the best
- the use of targets to develop further pupils' independence
- the quality of marking.

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

Ian Knight
Additional Inspector