

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



06 July 2007

Mrs C Parkyn  
Headteacher  
Grange Junior School  
Grange Drive  
Stratton St Margaret  
Swindon  
Wiltshire  
SN3 4JY

Dear Mrs Parkyn

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 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 parts of six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good. Standards are above average.

- Pupils make good progress and reach above average, and in some years well above average, standards in the Year 6 national tests.
- Although girls achieve well, they are still outperformed by boys. The school is currently seeking ways to help girls do even better.
- Records show that progress tends to slow in Year 4 and accelerate again in Years 5 and 6. The school has identified this as a priority for improvement and teachers are monitoring pupils' progress closely.
- Pupils are well motivated, enthusiastic learners. They collaborate well on group activities and work with concentration when engaged in independent tasks.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Flexible setting arrangements meet pupils' needs well and enable teachers to plan work that builds effectively on pupils' previous learning.
- Teachers' enjoyment of mathematics and their good subject knowledge are reflected in the pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun and that this helps them to learn well.
- Some teachers are very good at asking pupils to explain the strategies they use to work things out, but this is not done consistently well in every lesson.
- Teachers' marking does not always show pupils how to improve their work and sometimes pupils move on to new work without correcting errors or addressing misunderstandings.
- Termly assessments are used effectively to inform teachers' planning, to determine movement between sets, and to identify pupils who may need additional support with their learning.
- There were outstanding elements in a few lessons where pupils were challenged to extend their learning at a fast pace and to a high level of understanding.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Pupils are given good opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge and skills in a variety of situations, especially solving problems in real-life contexts.
- Mathematical skills are taught and used well in other subjects, such as learning about coordinates in geography and taking measurements when conducting science investigations.
- The curriculum is enriched through valuable links with other schools, especially through the international Comenius project. For example, pupils created recipes and exchanged weather data with their counterparts in other countries.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in mathematics is developing very well in some classes but is less effective in others. The school is in the middle of a programme of staff training and is also installing interactive whiteboards in every classroom.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The subject leader has a good understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development. She is leading developments well and has devised a clear plan of action to raise standards further.
- The assessment co-ordinator has developed very rigorous systems for analysing the performance of individual and groups of pupils throughout the school. These have provided valuable information which is now being used to target weaker areas and provide additional support for teachers and pupils.
- Every teacher has targets to meet as part of their performance management in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.

- Over the past two years, the school has introduced new systems for tracking individual pupils' progress which give senior managers a clearer view of the progress made by each year group. These are not yet fully effective as they currently show annual rather than termly progress.
- The school sets challenging end-of-year targets for each pupil, but pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in these or in checking their own progress towards them.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils clearly enjoy mathematics and take part in lessons with enthusiasm. This is because teachers use a variety of methods and resources and give pupils plenty of opportunity for practical 'hands-on' mathematics. Pupils particularly enjoy solving problems that are related to familiar everyday situations. This helps to make their learning relevant and interesting. Many are motivated by using ICT though this still a developing area. Pupils are given opportunities to work out their own strategies but they are not always encouraged to explain how they have tackled a problem or to suggest alternative methods.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is good. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because they receive effective support and are often taught in small groups. The school has identified that girls are not achieving quite as highly as boys, often because boys tend to dominate when answering questions in lessons. Teachers are addressing this by directing specific questions at girls and ensuring that they are fully included in whole-class sessions. This strategy is having a positive influence on girls' progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- sharpening the arrangements for tracking pupils' progress throughout each year so that senior managers can check more frequently on the progress being made and take prompt action to tackle early signs of underachievement
- using this information to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress throughout each year and to monitor the impact of initiatives to raise girls' achievement
- giving pupils more opportunities to explain their reasoning and the strategies they use when using mental and written calculations to solve problems.

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