

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



26 September 2007

Mrs Donna Chambers
Headteacher
Robert Mellors Primary and Nursery School
Bonington Drive
Arnold
Nottinghamshire
NG5 7EX

Dear Mrs Chambers

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 September 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 five lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding. Standards are broadly average.

- Pupils enter the school with standards well below average. Over the last three years, standards and achievement have improved greatly and were above average in Key Stage 2 tests in 2006. Results fell in 2007 but still show excellent progress from the very low results these pupils gained at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Pupils know their targets and, more importantly, what areas of mathematics they need to learn in order to reach them. The school is aspirational in challenging pupils but also realistic in its actions to meet targets. It supports all pupils in need and not just those who are on the borderline of Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils are enthusiastic about their work in mathematics and particularly enjoy practical tasks and those that allow them to investigate mathematics. Some pupils said they enjoyed calculations because they knew what they were doing and they liked getting things right. They commented that mathematics is fun because they are always challenged and their teachers link it to the work they are doing in other subjects. Lessons observed were taught through the topic being covered in literacy. For example, subtraction was seen as a spell by 'Harry Potter'.
- Behaviour in lessons was of the highest standard and reflects pupils' enjoyment. Pupils were confident and all were able to work independently when required. The youngest children did not need to be told to put on aprons when working with liquids: they knew the expectations and responded accordingly.
- Staff use resources well to make work realistic. For example, vegetables grown by pupils in the school allotment were used as a basis for a lesson on giving change.
- Pupils' very good progress in mathematics makes an excellent contribution towards developing important skills for their futures.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are outstanding.

- Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and know them well. This enables pupils who arrive at the school part way through the year to settle in well and work alongside their peers, even where they have shown very challenging behaviour in previous schools.
- Play is incorporated well into the planning and teaching for younger pupils so that they are able to acquire mathematical skills through well focused activities.
- Excellent use is made of highly effective teaching assistants.
- Teachers use questions very well to enhance pupils' reasoning skills. Pupils are always asked to justify answers and explain their reasoning. The very good relationships between pupils ensure that all feel confident at giving answers, even if they are wrong.
- Teachers have a good overview of the levels at which pupils are working and match work closely to their needs. They provide additional work to challenge pupils who finish before others or who are quick to grasp the concept being taught. Teachers assess work well and help pupils to overcome problems.
- Teachers share learning objectives effectively with pupils and review them at the end of lessons to consolidate learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The school has developed good schemes of work based on the Primary National Strategy materials, making judicious use of a variety of resources. However, more could be done to develop more open-ended and challenging resources and tasks suitable for the most able pupils.

- Mathematics is used well in a variety of subjects. In particular, good links between using and applying mathematics and experimentation within science enhance the work in both subjects.
- Effective use is made of whiteboards. The pupils say they enjoy using them during lessons.
- Teachers regularly share their subject knowledge and ideas on effective teaching, particularly on ways to introduce tasks. This ensures pupils have a rich variety of experiences to enhance their work in using and applying their mathematics.
- Very good support has been given to parents to help them better support their children.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- Staff work collegially within the school. You give excellent drive and direction to the school's work, accepting nothing but the very best for the pupils.
- Excellent procedures for tracking pupils' progress ensure all achieve at least in line with, and usually well above, national figures.
- Subject leadership is very strong and has worked well to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure it remains at a very high standard.
- Very good systems monitor the work in mathematics and evaluate its effectiveness. A 'So what?' philosophy ensures any issues raised are quickly improved, drawing on in-class support and suitable professional development.
- Although participating in national initiatives, the school adapts systems to ensure they best meet pupils' needs. Whilst the school delivers 'booster sessions', its main emphasis is on good teaching for all.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils enjoy mathematics; they feel that lessons are really interesting, especially when they are able to take part in practical sessions or use helpful resources. They commented that when they use mathematics in other subjects, it helps them see what is meant. Pupils respond well to excellent teaching and have very good relationships with teachers and teaching assistants. Close cooperation between staff on teaching ideas ensures a strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding. Investigations are an integral part of many lessons so that pupils are able to discover relationships for themselves. This also encourages independent work.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The school serves an area of great deprivation. Many pupils travel from further afield because of the school's high reputation for working successfully with pupils who have learning difficulties or behaviour problems. This is down to very strong leadership that ensures staff have high expectations of the work

and behaviour of all pupils. The school recognises that pupils will only be successful if lessons are stimulating and challenging. Very effective use is made of teaching assistants to ensure all pupils work well during lessons and those with learning difficulties make similar excellent progress to their peers. Close analysis of data enables the school to monitor the progress of pupils and to intervene when any appear to be falling behind expectations.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building on the excellent progress to date by increasing the number of pupils who reach Level 4 in Key Stage 2 tests
- extending the challenge for the highest attaining pupils.

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