

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



03 December 2007

Mr D Swan
Headteacher
Mark Cross CE Primary School
Mark Cross
Crowborough
East Sussex
TN6 3PJ

Dear Mr Swan

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29 November 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 observations of parts of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is outstanding and standards are high.

- Attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range of ability but is slightly above average overall. For the last two years, every pupil has reached Level 4 (the national expectation) in the subject and a very high proportion have achieved Level 5 (above average).
- Pupils make excellent progress in lessons because they are very enthusiastic, well-motivated learners who rise to the challenging pace of learning set by their teachers.
- They demonstrate very good understanding of mathematical concepts and are able to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of situations.

- Pupils are able to explain their reasoning and the methods they use confidently and articulately.
- Pupils work very well on independent tasks but also collaborate with partners and in groups very effectively, sharing ideas and discussing alternative strategies for solving problems.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are outstanding.

- The teachers' excellent subject knowledge and infectious enthusiasm for mathematics make learning fun for the pupils.
- They have very high expectations of each pupil and plan tasks for different groups that stretch them while taking good account of their existing knowledge and understanding.
- Lessons are exceptionally well planned and organised with a very strong emphasis on practical activities and this contributes strongly to pupils' understanding and enjoyment of mathematics.
- Teaching assistants are very well briefed so that they provide valuable support for pupils, especially those who find mathematics difficult.
- Excellent questioning challenges pupils to explain their methods and why they work.
- Teachers' rigorous ongoing assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding feeds into subsequent lessons to ensure that future learning builds effectively on what has gone before. This was seen to very good effect in the way the Year 5/6 teacher responded to pupils' concerns about solving multi-step problems involving fractions and percentages.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- The revised numeracy framework is firmly at the heart of the school's successful approach to mathematics teaching. It is adapted very well to meet the needs of the mixed age-group classes.
- Problem solving and using and applying mathematics are given high priority and are integrated fully into everyday learning.
- ICT is used very effectively to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy using interactive whiteboards and find them helpful because they illustrate mathematical ideas in interesting ways.
- The curriculum is planned to include effective links with other subjects. In an excellent Year 3/4 lesson, pupils with learning difficulties used a story from their literacy lesson to reinforce their understanding of time while able pupils solved more challenging problems by analysing TV schedules.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- You and the subject leader both have very high aspirations for all pupils and monitor their progress very closely.
- You set challenging targets for each pupil and have introduced rigorous assessment procedures and regular progress reviews with every teacher. These ensure that appropriate support is put in place for any pupils who may not be making enough progress, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- The school has rightly identified a need for more rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress from Reception to Year 2 in order to have a clearer idea of how well pupils are doing in relation to their Foundation Stage assessments.
- The subject leader undertakes detailed analysis of assessment information. This feeds into curricular targets for each year group.
- The subject action plan has a clear focus on raising standards and arises from rigorous evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and of pupils' achievements in different aspects of the subject.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils greatly enjoy mathematics lessons and participate in all activities with enthusiasm. Several said how much they enjoy mathematics games, especially those that involve using the interactive whiteboards. Pupils also like working things out and discussing ideas with their 'response partners'. They have a very good understanding of mathematical concepts and language and use their knowledge and skills very well to solve problems. Pupils say their targets are useful because they help them see what they need to do to get better. They say that teachers help them to understand mathematics by explaining things clearly and showing them different ways to solve problems.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding. Girls and boys do equally well in mathematics because teachers ensure that they are all given work that interests and motivates them. Pupils with learning difficulties are given very good support, both in lessons and through additional intervention groups. They make very good progress as a result. Excellent planning in each of the four mixed-age classes meets the needs of pupils in different year groups exceptionally well and ensures progression in learning from year to year.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- as you have already identified, sharpening the arrangements for tracking pupils' progress from Reception to Year 2 in order to evaluate their achievement against Foundation Stage levels of attainment.

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