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Mr R Harris
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Dear Mr Harris

## Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 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, governors 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.

- Standards in national assessments at the end of Year 6 have been well above average for several years. In 2007, some of the most able pupils did not do quite as well as expected in the tests.
- Pupils arrive in the school with above average attainment. Those currently in the school, including pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, are making good progress.
- Pupils gain a good understanding of mathematical ideas because they are helped to develop their mathematical thinking and reasoning as they acquire knowledge and skills.

- Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons, particularly when they are challenged and when they are able to work on investigations and problem-solving activities.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Pupils' mathematical thinking is developed well, both by careful selection of stimulating activities and by sensitive but probing questioning by teachers.
- Teachers generally match work to the needs of individual pupils well, but the most able are not always stretched enough, particularly in Year 6, and hence do not achieve as well as they should.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to ensure that pupils are able to make good progress.
- There is some inconsistency in the quality of marking of pupils' work. Older pupils, particularly, are not given clear enough information about the levels they are working at, or whether they are achieving their individual mathematics targets.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- A good balance of time and attention is given to the different aspects of the subject, with a wide range of activities included to help develop pupils' capabilities in using and applying mathematics.
- Effective links are made between mathematics and other subjects. This helps pupils to appreciate the place and importance of mathematics in everyday life.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The school has set out clear priorities for further improvement in the teaching and learning of mathematics.
- Detailed records are kept to track pupils' attainment and progress. This tracking information is used well to guide teachers' planning and to set whole-school targets, but is not used sufficiently to give pupils clear individual targets.
- Good use is made of resources. The effective deployment of teaching assistants ensures that teachers' work is augmented well, to the benefit of all pupils.
- You and your deputy monitor and evaluate the work of teachers well but you do not involve the mathematics co-ordinator enough in classroom observation for her to have a complete picture of work in mathematics across the school.

## Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils like learning mathematics. By their responses in lessons and by their comments, it is clear that they really enjoy achieving well, for instance when working on investigations or in problem-solving activities. They like working in pairs or small

groups and this is a common feature of many lessons. Teachers are adept at asking searching and probing questions. They listen carefully to pupils' responses and then ask follow-up questions that aid their thinking and reasoning. Pupils are consequently developing confidence in using accurate language to describe and explain their thinking and thus their understanding of mathematical ideas is improving well. The school has worked hard to use a wide range of investigative and problem-solving approaches within the context of learning all aspects of the subject. This enables pupils not only to learn facts, skills and routines, but to enhance their capability in using and applying mathematics in order to build up their grasp of mathematical concepts.

## Inclusion

Care is taken to ensure that every pupil is able to access all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. Boys and girls do equally well and, because the school tracks the progress of each individual, the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as others. Work is generally well matched to pupils' needs and hence the level of challenge in lessons is good. Occasionally, some older pupils are not stretched as much as they should be. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well in class, through carefully planned activities and by the support of specialist teachers and teaching assistants.

## Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that work challenges the most able to do their best, especially in classes for older pupils
- review guidelines on marking pupils' work in mathematics and undertake regular checks to ensure that marking is being used effectively to guide pupils in improving their work
- give older pupils clearer indications of their targets and then provide more detailed information for them on how near they are to achieving these targets
- provide more opportunities for the mathematics co-ordinator to undertake review activities in other classrooms in order that she has a clearer picture of what is being provided across the school.

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

George Knights
Additional Inspector