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27 November 2007

Mrs S Dixie  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Dixie

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 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 observation of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding. Standards are well above average by the time pupils leave the school at age eleven years.

- Children's mathematical development on entry to the school is exceptionally low. Many of the children speak very little English at this age. They make good progress in mathematical development in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This accelerates further in Key Stage 2. Standards are below average overall in Year 2 but rising year on year. They are consistently well above average in Year 6, as reflected in national tests. A high proportion of pupils exceed the standard expected for their age.

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics because numerical and computational skills are taught rigorously from the outset. The development of pupils' language skills alongside mathematical skills raises pupils' confidence in talking about their work. Teaching through oral work and by encouraging pupils to explain what they are doing is central to the teachers' planning in all lessons. This works well. Support from a well-directed team of learning assistants is acutely focused on needs that are identified through rigorous assessment systems.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have high expectations. They are patient in waiting for responses in oral work, which raises pupils' self-esteem and eliminates worries about getting the answer wrong. The use of 'talking partners' at frequent points in all lessons provides good opportunities for all pupils to test out their ideas and to argue and explain their thinking to each other.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute significantly to pupils' good attitudes.
- Pupils' awareness of what they need to do to succeed is increasing. Written work is marked thoroughly, providing pupils with meaningful comments about how to improve.
- Good planning, based on a cycle of oral, practical and written work underpins pupils' learning and leads to constant reinforcement of mathematical concepts and skills. The tasks set for individual pupils and groups are well devised. They are realistic, but challenging.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is stimulating and flexible. High priority is given to the integral development of pupils' language, communication and mathematical skills.
- The school is innovative in seeking out opportunities to promote understanding of mathematics, particularly through extra-curricular activities. These contribute enormously to pupils' progress because teachers are on hand to give immediate support. Many families do not have the language skills to support children's learning at home through homework. The school seeks to help parents to understand the methods through which children learn in school.
- The school is looking at ways of structuring the methods pupils use for calculation so that they do not become confused by too many different methods in the early years when their skills in English are still very limited.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The leadership and management of the subject are exemplary. They have a direct influence on the progress of every pupil.
- Expectations of pupils' progress in the subject are high throughout the school. Pupils' limited language skills on entry are not seen as a reason for lesser progress in the early years, but, rather, as a challenge to be overcome through a stimulating and proactive learning environment. All staff understand well the part they play in contributing to the pupils' well-being and progress.
- Self-critical evaluation of the subject area and its outcomes is sharp and accurate. It leads to relevant initiatives to take pupils' learning further.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Boys and girls enjoy mathematics. They gain in confidence as their language skills improve, particularly in Years 5 and 6 when they find themselves more able to explain the reasoning behind their thinking. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Their teaching captures pupils' interest and imagination from the start. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy solving simple problems. They have clear strategies for dealing with them but some find difficulty with more complex problems that involve a number of operations. There is good evidence of open-ended investigative work being used to stimulate thinking in lessons and in additional work.

## Inclusion

The needs of pupils of all abilities, including the most able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are met outstandingly. Children's potential is exploited to the full from the moment they start school. They flourish because the school makes very good provision and sets high targets that overcome the initial disadvantage of the low attainment on entry. Pupils' self-confidence in coping with mathematics, at whatever level, is developed well because the school invests heavily in high quality teaching and additional support. Pupils leave the school with secure foundations in mathematical skills that will serve them well for the future. The school's ethos is underpinned by the high regard and sense of achievement that pupils and staff alike have for the school. Its work is inspirational.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- simplifying, and making consistent, the methods used for calculation in the whole-school curriculum for mathematics.

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

June Tracey  
Additional Inspector