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Mrs G Goodson
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Dear Mrs Goodson

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 January 2008 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 two lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good. Standards are broadly average.

- Children's mathematical development on entry to this small school is similar to that of others of this age. Pupils make good progress in mathematics up to the age of seven. Provision focuses sharply on the meaningful understanding of number concepts and the development of mathematical skills. Standards are above average in Year 2. Pupils' gains in knowledge and cooperative attitudes secure a good platform for learning in subsequent years.
- Standards are broadly average in Year 6. This represents good achievement taking into account the significant number of pupils who join the school during Years 3-6, many of whom have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A contributory factor to pupils' good progress is teachers' use of strategies that

enable all pupils to experience a measure of success, however small, in every lesson.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teaching strategies are underpinned well by regular professional development. Teachers discuss and test out new ideas before deciding whether or not they are relevant to the teaching in this small school.
- Pupils are actively engaged in their own learning through self-assessment and through one-to-one discussion with teachers about their progress towards clearly written targets.
- Information from regular assessment and testing is used selectively to initiate a fast response when a pupil's progress is below what is expected. Teachers and teaching assistants work together flexibly so support is quickly diverted to pupils who need it, as needs arise.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge and expertise well to encourage pupils to reason things out for themselves without being afraid of making mistakes. Misconceptions are used to delve into the reasons for pupils' difficulties in understanding, and, hence, to move the lesson on.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is designed thoughtfully. Its flexibility enables the school to respond quickly to national initiatives and to the pupils' specific needs. For example, it has been adapted to cater for the three mixed-age classes and for the significant number of pupils who join the school after the age of seven.
- Regular practice of mental mathematics underpins pupils' work well in other strands of the subject.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics, especially in lessons that include 'hands-on' practical activities.
- Pupils are grouped by ability rather than age within the mixed-age classes. Teachers use the flexibility of this arrangement well to facilitate pupils' movement between groups, within lessons, according to their level of understanding in the topic being studied.
- Provision for gifted pupils is being extended through collaboration with local schools.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Collaborative leadership is effective in responding to issues highlighted through self-evaluation procedures and emanating from national initiatives.
- Information from assessment procedures is analysed skilfully and used well. Support and resources are distributed fairly across the ability groups in each

class. Pupils are suitably challenged at levels compatible with their ability and potential.
- Proactive response to the frequent monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning leads successfully to a rolling programme of intervention and improvement throughout the year.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematic

Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is a contributory factor to pupils' enjoyment. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, it is exemplified in the quality of pupils' discussion in play and in oral work. They are inquisitive about aspects of mathematics that impinge on their everyday life. Pupils develop and put into practice useful strategies for solving simple problems. In Key Stage 2, they are stimulated by work in the 'Can do' sessions. They enjoy arguing the best approach to the problem with their partners and gain satisfaction from finding alternative routes to a solution. As an extension of this work, higher ability pupils, and others, would benefit from working through, and recording the thinking behind, the solutions to more complex, open-ended questions.

Inclusion

Inclusion is excellent. The school provides exceedingly well for all pupils because, at whatever age they join the school, the programme of learning is structured to take account of their prior experiences and progress. This is the reason why pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who join the school at a late stage make such good progress. All pupils benefit from learning in this small school where they are known well by adults and valued for the contribution they make to the community. The development of pupils' numerical and mathematical skills is good, and central to the school's commitment to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing regular opportunities for open-ended investigative work in the curriculum in Key Stage 2.

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