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Mr David Coll  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Coll

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 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 six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Standards are above average and achievement is good.

- Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is broadly average. They make steady progress in Years 5 and 6. The school does not unduly disrupt the curriculum in Year 6 to prepare for national tests and pupils attain average standards in them. After the tests, teaching is sustained and pupils make very good progress in the remainder of Year 6 and throughout Year 7, leaving the school with standards above average.
- The school carefully analyses tests to identify areas of underachievement. These are then tackled by changing the emphasis in schemes of work or the way in which sets are taught. For example, some Year 6 groups are taught in single sex sets. Boys and girls alike say this helps them with their work and that it makes them more confident to answer questions in class.

- The school is taking part in an 'Assessing Pupils Progress' (APP) project and this has given a greater focus on elements of 'using and applying mathematics'.
- Behaviour was always good in lessons, with many generating enthusiastic learners who wanted to carry on after the end of the lesson. Pupils are encouraged and supported to be independent learners as well as to work effectively in groups. Coupled with good skills in numeracy and responsibility for the school council's budget, this helps prepare pupils well for their future economic wellbeing.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teaching, based upon good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils, entuses pupils who make good progress in lessons. Pupils say they enjoy being able to use the electronic whiteboards which teachers use effectively.
- Lessons are well planned; good use is made of APP materials to enhance pupils' use and application of mathematics. Investigations are often used as a basis for extended work within lessons.
- Assessment is used well to match work to pupils' needs. Teachers question pupils effectively to find out what they know and then adapt teaching accordingly. They expect pupils to give full answers, including explaining why and justifying their responses. In some classes, excellent procedures ensure equal numbers of boys and girls answer questions and that they work with different mathematics partners. However, this is not the case in other classes.
- Marking is informative and helps pupils improve but it does not let them know the level at which they are working. Sometimes instructions to complete work are not followed up by staff.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Schemes of work are comprehensive and adapted from plans provided by the National Strategies. Teachers discuss and share good teaching ideas. Joint planning in year teams results in stimulating activities that are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities.
- There is a strong emphasis on 'using and applying mathematics' but progression in the different strands is not highlighted in lesson plans.
- The school works well with partner first schools to ensure good transfer at the end of Year 4 but does not have similar success when pupils transfer at the end of Year 7.
- A comprehensive audit has identified where mathematics is found in other subjects but this has not yet informed greater coherence across the curriculum.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- The school has worked effectively on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. It monitors carefully all elements of the work within

mathematics and this has ensured an accurate self-assessment and action plan for further improvement.

- Performance management leads effectively to the identification of training needs. Good use is made of Local Authority (LA) consultants to support teachers. The LA has drawn on the school's expertise to demonstrate good practice.
- The strong team spirit and collegiate approach to planning and teaching mean lessons are engaging and interesting for pupils. The subject leader gives a very strong direction on how work should be developing and supports colleagues to bring about improvements.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Pupils say they enjoy mathematics because it is interesting, their teachers use a variety of activities and they explain things very well. Pupils particularly enjoy investigations and practical work and like to work in groups to discuss activities. Good questioning by teachers and the high expectation that pupils give clear reasons to their answers help them to have a better understanding of the topics covered. The school uses a variety of exercises from books and other resources but there is not an over-reliance on these.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good. Work is well planned and the school is keen to adapt teaching groups, and work, to ensure pupils have a better chance of achieving. Careful analysis of the progress individual pupils make is crucial in identifying any underachievement which is then quickly remedied. The school provides additional support for pupils at the time of end-of-key-stage tests but concentrates on consistently good teaching across all years to promote the best progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring all staff provide systematic opportunities for pupils to answer questions
- identifying progression in 'using and applying mathematics' in schemes of work and the ways mathematics can support other areas of the curriculum
- improving transfer arrangements at the end of Year 7, building upon the effective systems for joining 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

Michael Smith  
Her Majesty's Inspector