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Dear Mrs Watts

## Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 February 2008 to look at work in mathematics.

As outlined in our initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the effectiveness of the school's approaches to improving the quality of teaching and learning in 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

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 satisfactory.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and standards are in line with national averages.

- Pupils make steady gains in knowledge and skills as they move through the school. Senior staff have identified that too few pupils make good progress in their learning. The main priority for the current year is to raise achievement in mathematics.
- To this end, the school has set challenging targets for every pupil. Assessment records show that pupils in Year 6 are making good progress towards their targets and standards look set to exceed those achieved in 2007. Progress in other year groups is also beginning to accelerate as teachers implement new strategies and initiatives.

- Pupils do less well in using and applying their mathematical knowledge and skills than in other aspects of the subject.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and most enjoy mathematics lessons. They join in discussions with enthusiasm and work well independently, in pairs and in small groups

## Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers make lessons interesting and enjoyable for pupils. This engages their attention and involves them effectively in learning.
- Lessons make effective use of a good range of visual and practical resources, including interactive whiteboards, that suit pupils' differing ways of learning.
- Teachers make sure pupils grasp what they are intended to learn at the beginning of each lesson. They do not always reinforce this enough during the lesson or return to it at the end in order to give pupils a clearer understanding of how well they have done.
- Teachers ask pupils to describe how they have worked something out but do not always challenge them sufficiently to explain the reasoning behind it or to suggest alternative strategies.
- Teaching assistants are well briefed and provide good support for pupils who find learning difficult.
- Day-to-day assessments are not always used effectively to ensure that, for every pupil, each lesson's learning builds successfully on the last one.

## Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school is at an early stage of implementing the revised framework for mathematics. Local authority advisers are providing support and guidance for teachers in updating the curriculum plans for the mixed-age classes.
- Problem-solving and investigations are not planned well enough as an integral part of other aspects of mathematics, tending instead to be taught as separate activities.
- The curriculum includes plenty of 'hands-on' experiences that involve pupils actively in learning. As a result, pupils find mathematics interesting and enjoyable. They particularly like doing mathematics challenges on the computer.

## Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Rigorous self-evaluation has identified accurately what needs to be done to raise achievement.
- Lesson observations focus well on the quality of pupils' learning and provide clear guidance for teachers on how to improve their practice but this is not always followed up sufficiently to ensure that improvement takes place.
- By monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work, senior leaders keep a close check on the consistency and continuity of learning for pupils in the three classes that are shared between pairs of part-time/job-share teachers.

- The headteacher meets regularly with class teachers to review each pupil's progress. This leads to early intervention to deal with signs of underachievement.
- The impact of all of this work is beginning to be seen in accelerating rates of progress, but there is still some way to go to ensure good progress for all.

## Subject issue: the effectiveness of the school's approaches to improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

- Each teacher and teaching assistant has performance targets that are linked to pupils' achievement in the subject.
- Teachers are given opportunities to observe best practice in mathematics in other small schools with mixed-age classes.
- They have all attended recent and relevant training courses to enhance their subject knowledge and expertise. Good practice and innovative ideas are shared amongst staff at regular training meetings.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Pupils capable of higher attainment have not always made as much progress as they should in the past. Their progress is now being tracked more rigorously and greater challenge is built into their targets.
- Historically, pupils have made slower progress in Year 3 than in other year groups. The school is currently analysing the reasons for this and seeking ways to prepare pupils more successfully for the transition into Key Stage 2.

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

- accelerating pupils' progress by ensuring that day-to-day assessment is used more sharply to plan work that builds successfully on each pupil's previous learning
- involving pupils more constructively in evaluating their own learning
- creating more effective links between different aspects of mathematics, especially by integrating problem solving into the curriculum more effectively.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics in the school. As explained in our previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector