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Mrs S Carter
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Carter

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 11 March 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, observation of parts of nine lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good and standards are above average.

- Pupils make good progress in their learning because lessons are well planned to develop their understanding of mathematical ideas.
- Standards in mathematics are not as high as those in reading and writing. This is because the focus on improving achievement in mathematics is a more recent initiative and new strategies have not yet had their full impact.
- Pupils are able to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in a variety of situations, many of which are rooted in everyday experiences. More able pupils have a good understanding of how to tackle problems systematically.

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons because teachers make them interesting and exciting. They work well with partners and in groups and also develop good independent learning skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Collaborative planning enables teachers to share expertise and ensures consistency between the three classes in each year group.
- An outstanding feature is the way teachers plan learning within the context of a story. For example, Year 2 pupils were highly motivated by solving problems associated with the 'Sunken Treasure' story.
- All pupils are actively engaged in 'hands-on' learning using a wide variety of resources that relate to everyday life. Year 1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed 'buying' items of food when they visited 'Mrs Wobble's Cosy Café'.
- Teachers make very effective use of interactive whiteboards to engage pupils' interest and to provide a visual stimulus for learning.
- Pupils receive good support and have a clear idea of what they are expected to learn in each lesson. On occasions, some less able pupils are not fully engaged in whole class sessions and do not understand well enough what they have to do when they move on to their group tasks.
- Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' progress and adjust planned activities to ensure that they build effectively on previous learning. Pupils do not have individual curriculum targets, as they have in writing for example. Consequently they are not fully involved in assessing their own progress.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is outstanding.

- The creative use of story as a medium for teaching mathematics contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment and understanding.
- Other activities are planned exceptionally well within the context of pupils' everyday experiences. This makes learning more meaningful and relevant and meets pupils' needs and interests very well.
- The curriculum is greatly enriched by the outstanding learning environment, especially the eye-catching and informative displays in every class and the excellent grounds which are used imaginatively to promote outdoor learning.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects. They take measurements in science and design and technology and present data in history and geography. Art work in the style of Kandinsky makes effective use of pupils' knowledge of shape and pattern.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The whole school is currently focused on raising standards and achievement in mathematics. Every teacher has performance targets that reflect a firm commitment to improving pupils' learning.

- The subject leader has high levels of expertise and keeps up-to-date with local and national initiatives. Her rigorous analysis of pupils' responses to questions in tests and assessments provides clear pointers for improvement. These feed into teachers' professional development.
- The recently improved systems for tracking pupils' progress throughout each year are used well to identify those pupils who are not making enough progress. At present these do not provide a sufficiently clear overview of each pupil's progress from Reception to Year 2. Consequently leaders are not able to demonstrate how well pupils are doing in relation to their different starting points.

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

- Senior leaders are proactive in seeking out relevant courses and training opportunities for all staff. These help to enhance the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- The subject leader provides effective training and support for all staff as they adapt and implement the renewed national strategy framework.
- Lesson observations identify good practice and focus clearly on how well pupils are learning. They do not always identify how teachers could do even better.

Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

- Teachers plan activities well to meet the diverse needs within each class.
- There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties through additional intervention groups.
- Gifted and talented mathematicians have valuable opportunities to take part in specially planned activities, such as 'Pentafun', with pupils from other schools.
- There is no overview of the achievement of specific groups of pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- sharpening the procedures for tracking pupils' progress from Reception to Year 2 in order to evaluate their achievement against their individual starting points.

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