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Mr C Hodges
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Dear Mr Hodges

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 13 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 and observation of parts of 16 lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding and standards are very high.

- Pupils make exceptionally good progress and demonstrate thorough understanding of mathematical concepts.
- They apply their skills and knowledge confidently in a wide range of contexts. They thrive on mathematical challenges and open-ended investigations and are unafraid to make mistakes.
- Pupils make rapid progress in lessons because they are highly motivated learners who thoroughly enjoy the activities teachers plan for them.

- Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress because staff know their individual needs and give them plenty of practical activities to reinforce their understanding.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is outstanding.

- Lessons are fast-paced, exciting and challenging for pupils of all abilities. This maintains their interest and motivates them to learn.
- Highly effective setting arrangements provide activities that are differentiated at eight levels of difficulty, and sometimes more, within each year group. Learning is exceptionally well tailored to each pupil's needs.
- Teachers' excellent subject expertise is shared constructively at weekly year group planning sessions that make for consistency and continuity in provision. Teaching assistants attend these sessions and are consequently very well briefed.
- Teachers successfully inspire pupils with their own enthusiasm for mathematics through a combination of games, problems and investigations that make use of and build upon the skills pupils acquire each week.
- Perceptive questioning develops pupils' deeper understanding and challenges them to explain their methods and reasoning in mathematical terms.
- Rigorous on-going assessment of pupils' understanding ensures that each day's learning builds very well on the last.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is outstanding.

- Using and applying mathematics is at the heart of all learning, within a very well planned framework of skills teaching.
- The curriculum is enriched by excellent links with other subjects. For example, pupils use data loggers in science, measure out ingredients when making cakes and use stop watches in physical education.
- Teachers make imaginative use of the extensive grounds for activities such as treasure hunts, orienteering and teaching coordinates.
- Challenge days, the Year 5 'Micro Society' project and participation in 'World Maths Day' are among a number of additional activities that make a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment and understanding.
- Gifted mathematicians are given work that extends their thinking and problem-solving capabilities to the levels expected of 14 year old pupils.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- The subject leader is an experienced specialist who drives improvements in mathematics teaching by sharing her own considerable expertise with colleagues.
- Senior leaders are constantly seeking ways to make learning more enjoyable and effective for all pupils. They are exceptionally well-informed and quick to respond to national and local initiatives, while embracing new ideas only if they complement what is already working well.

- Their very high expectations for all pupils are reflected in the rigorous systems for assessing and tracking each pupil's progress. For example, leaders are currently focusing on ways to support pupils who achieved a Level 2C in Year 2 so that they reach Level 5 in Year 6.
- The school recognises that it needs to formalise the way teachers assess pupils' attainment and progress in using and applying mathematics.
- Regular lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work identify good practice and areas for further improvement. These feed effectively into teachers' performance management and their ongoing professional development.

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

- Very strong mutual support systems in each year group ensure that teachers and assistants share best practice, useful ideas and interesting resources.
- The subject leader works alongside colleagues to improve their practice through coaching and mentoring.
- She is alert to opportunities for all staff to benefit from relevant training courses and regularly draws these to their attention.

Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is outstanding.

- Pupils who find learning difficult receive excellent support in lessons as well as additional one-to-one tuition where necessary to build their confidence or overcome misconceptions.
- The most able pupils are given very challenging work that extends their understanding to high levels.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- sharpening the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in using and applying mathematics.

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