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Mrs F Simpson  
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Dear Mrs Simpson

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 5 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

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

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and standards are average.

- The school's data shows children make good progress in mathematical development.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 indicate a good upward trend in mathematics since 2005; achievement rose and standards reached above-average levels in 2007. However, staffing changes since then and a whole-school focus on literacy have meant that improvement in standards has slowed. Currently, standards are broadly average in Years 2 and 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school.

- Pupils' calculation skills are good but their capacity to apply their knowledge and understanding is not as strong.
- Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are good. They persevere in the face of challenges and, when asked, willingly explain their reasoning understanding to others in the class

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory overall and there are good elements.

- Lesson planning is good and the work provided is well differentiated to match pupils' learning needs.
- In all lessons there is a clear focus on mathematical language and the correct use of specific vocabulary.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and good opportunities to evaluate what they have achieved at the end of the lesson.
- Pupils' conceptual difficulties are identified and remedied better in some lessons than others. This is a particularly good feature of the teaching in one of the upper junior classes.
- Formal assessment is good and better than day to day assessment. For example, the marking of pupils' work does not always pinpoint their mistakes and help them to learn from them.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- Much of the planning is thorough and detailed. This helps pupils to learn calculation skills systematically.
- The curriculum is sensitively adapted to meet the needs of pupils requiring additional learning support to enable them to reach their targets and the levels expected. Provision for the most able pupils is largely limited to differentiated activities in lessons.
- Although 'using and applying mathematics' features in some lessons, there are inconsistencies in provision.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- The involvement of a local authority consultant in 2005/06 had a notable impact on teaching and learning. The school implemented improved assessment and planning strategies and standards began to rise.
- Since then, the school has concentrated on literacy. The mathematics subject leader has had few opportunities to carry out a rigorous evaluation of teaching and learning of mathematics across the school. This has made it harder to maintain and improve the quality of teaching at a time when some teachers have joined the school and changed year groups.

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

- The school's approaches to improving the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics have been particularly effective in the past, more so than they are currently.
- There is good expertise in the teaching of mathematics in the school, particularly in the skills of identifying pupils' misconceptions and using them to sharpen the teaching. However, this expertise is not shared sufficiently to benefit all teachers and pupils.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

- The school has an inclusive ethos. Teachers plan their lessons, taking account of pupils' different learning needs.
- Careful time-tabling of lessons and support group activities ensures that pupils do not miss important opportunities in other areas such as information and communication technology.
- The school tracks pupils' progress carefully to check that boys and girls are doing equally well and acts quickly to provide additional support for any pupils in danger of not reaching the levels expected in mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the teaching of mathematics is checked with the purpose of improving pupils' learning
- sharing the good practice that already exists in school to improve teachers' subject knowledge
- ensuring teaching and marking of pupils' work focuses more sharply on identifying pupils' understanding and misconceptions and using these to improve their learning of 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

Colin Smith  
Additional Inspector