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Dear Mr Woods

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 7 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good and standards are average.

- Pupils enter the junior school with knowledge and skills that are below average. They achieve well; Year 6 pupils are working at the levels expected for their age.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 show that standards were below average in 2007 but this group of pupils had a well below average starting point.
- Pupils' calculation skills are secure but their knowledge and understanding of shape and handling data are not as strong. Intensive teaching of these areas of weakness is resulting in improvements.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards mathematics. They enjoy challenges and willingly explain their understanding to others in the class.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Teachers plan their lessons carefully to ensure that pupils' different learning needs are catered for.
- Lessons include good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills to solve a variety of mathematical problems.
- Difficulties that pupils encounter in lessons, such as not understanding mathematical terms, are quickly identified and rectified.
- Mental strategies are not encouraged sufficiently in some lessons.
- The marking of pupils' work does not always help them to know what they need to do to improve. Pupils are unsure of their targets.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The new framework has been thoughtfully introduced. This is providing better opportunities for pupils to consolidate their understanding.
- All pupils have good access to information and communications technology (ICT), which increases their understanding and enjoyment of mathematics.
- Gifted and talented pupils benefit from rich opportunities to extend their mathematical understanding through projects, such as the lego challenge.
- The curriculum is carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils who require learning support.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Good evaluation of assessment results, lesson observations and pupils' work enables the school to pinpoint the areas requiring attention.
- The headteacher's vision, energy and high aspirations underpin the drive for improvement.
- The two subject leaders are creative in testing the impact of new methods and approaches on one or two classes, before making wide-scale changes.
- Good teamwork and clarity of purpose amongst senior staff, subject and year-group leaders ensures that everyone is pulling in the same direction.

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 are proving increasingly effective.
- A number of teachers have good expertise in the teaching of mathematics. They know how to identify pupils' misconceptions and use them to sharpen their teaching. Although this expertise is used in specific instances it is not shared as widely as it could be to benefit all teachers and pupils.

Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

- The school has an inclusive atmosphere in which all pupils are valued equally and encouraged to participate in all activities.
- The school monitors the progress of boys and girls of different ethnic backgrounds carefully to ensure that all groups achieve equally well.
- The curriculum and lessons are adjusted to cater for pupils' different learning needs. Many pupils speak English in school and other languages at home, therefore they are encouraged and helped to speak in full sentences to improve their English

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making sure that when pupils' work is marked, pointers for improvement are given to help them to know how to remedy any errors or misconceptions
- encouraging pupils to use mental strategies as a means of solving problems
- ensuring that pupils understand and can articulate their targets for improvement
- sharing the good mathematical expertise more widely to improve teaching and learning further.

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