

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms K Price  
Acting Headteacher  
Kirkland and Caterall St Helen's CE VA  
Primary School  
The Green Churchtown  
Garstang  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR3 0HS

Dear Ms Price

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 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.

- Children's achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. They enter the Reception class with attainment broadly expected for their age and reach the goals expected by the end of the year.
- Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1 and standards are just above average by the end of Year 2.
- Given pupils' starting points when they enter Key Stage 2, their achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are average by the end of Year 6.
- There was a downward trend in both key stages a few years ago but, since 2005, standards have gradually begun to rise.

- Pupils' calculation skills, understanding of shape and handling data are more secure than their capacity to solve mathematical problems. The school has recognised this and is increasing opportunities for using and applying mathematics.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics. They work well independently and together, enjoy challenges, and respond positively to advice and written comments in their books.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

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

- Lessons are interesting. They move along at a good pace and pupils are encouraged to discuss and explain their ideas. These factors improve their reasoning skills and keep them engaged.
- Pupils know what they are expected to learn and constructive marking of their completed work helps them to know what they need to do to improve.
- Vibrant and informative displays enhance pupils' understanding and encourage them to use resources imaginatively to develop independent learning skills.
- Assessment is used well to identify what pupils have understood over a period of time, but it is not always used well enough in lessons to diagnose and correct pupils' misconceptions and this slows their progress.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- Good links between mathematics and other subjects helps pupils to appreciate the importance of mathematics in the outside world.
- Increased opportunities for using and applying mathematics have created a more balanced curriculum, although the activities mainly involve problem solving rather than involving pupils in wider mathematical investigations.
- Effective use of interactive whiteboards helps pupils to understand mathematical ideas. Class computers are used more purposefully in some lessons than others.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- The acting headteacher is steering the school successfully through a difficult period of staff absences. However, monitoring and evaluating the school's work in mathematics has not been a priority. The subject leader has had few opportunities to carry out rigorous evaluation of teaching and learning of mathematics across the school. This has made it harder to improve the quality of teaching.
- Nevertheless, teachers and support staff are working effectively as a team to improve the mathematics curriculum and the assessment of pupils' learning.
- New procedures to track the progress of individual pupils are helping to identify where additional support and resources are needed. As a result, a greater proportion of pupils are on course to reach or exceed the levels expected than has been the case in recent years.

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

- The school has begun training to implement the new framework for mathematics. The process is prompting the school to review its provision and the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement in the different areas of mathematics. For example, pupils' calculation skills have improved as a result of staff training in this area.
- Some teachers have good expertise in the teaching of mathematics. They understand how pupils think, anticipate their misconceptions and use this knowledge to guide them forward. However, this expertise is not shared sufficiently to benefit all teachers and pupils.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

- Lessons are well matched to pupils' different needs to enable all pupils to make progress.
- Increasing attention is being focussed on the needs of the able, gifted and talented pupils to help them to fulfil their potential.
- Those pupils who require additional support with mathematics are given effective help to learn successfully.
- Timetables are carefully constructed to ensure that pupils have full and equal access to all activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' capacity to use and apply their knowledge and skills to raise achievement in Key Stage 2
- teachers paying more attention to pupils' errors and misconceptions in lessons and using these to improve pupils' understanding
- ensuring that the teaching of mathematics is checked regularly with the purpose of improve pupils' learning
- sharing the good practice that already exists in school to improve teachers' subject knowledge.

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