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Dear Mr Smith

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 4 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four 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 consistently make above average progress and results in Key Stage 2 tests show standards are above the national average. The school analyses test results closely to identify, and update, any areas which need greater emphasis within schemes of work.
- Progress in lessons observed was predominantly good; pupils responded well to some stimulating and exciting work. Pupils say they enjoy mathematics because lessons are fun. They particularly like lessons when they include practical work or investigations. There is a buzz of enthusiasm and pupils' behaviour is good.

- All pupils know their targets which are based upon the topic of mathematics being studied. Reception children proudly say what they have to do next and they work well together and quickly gain good social skills.
- The strong emphasis on problem solving enables the school to track pupils' levels in 'using and applying mathematics' effectively. This, along with good numeracy skills, prepares pupils well for the next phase of their education.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Lessons are well planned. They start with an appropriate oral activity which engages and involves all pupils. Pupils then complete a variety of tasks which are well matched to their levels in the mixed-age classes.
- Tasks are often practical activities or investigations which allow pupils to discover rules in mathematics for themselves, given suitable guidance and support.
- Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils well. Groups take turn to use information communication technology (ICT) to extend their understanding.
- Lessons conclude with pupils reflecting upon what they have learned. Teachers consolidate their learning by returning to objectives which had been shared at the start of the lesson and also referring to the displayed class targets.
- Teachers use the electronic whiteboards effectively, for example, showing a variety of images and graphs to stimulate discussion. Pupils also use the whiteboards well to explain their reasoning.
- The quality of assessment in books is good and supports pupils' improvement by identifying next steps. In lessons, teachers skilfully use pupils' responses as teaching points and identify any pupils who appear to be less confident and target support for them.
- When teaching was satisfactory, weaknesses in subject knowledge and a lack of drive contributed to pupils' slower rate of progress in lessons.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is outstanding.

- The school makes good use of the revised Primary Strategy Framework to develop excellent schemes of work. All units of work identify opportunities for 'using and applying mathematics' and practical work, and indicate where ICT might be used for classroom demonstration and individual pupils' work. They also give guidance on teaching strategies and assessment opportunities.
- Reception children receive a good mixture of directed and child-instigated activities.
- Problem solving is embedded within the schemes, with a strong emphasis on investigation rather than just considering word problems as part of test preparation.
- The schemes of work in other subjects identify areas of mathematics which support those subjects, for example within science, geography and art.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The new subject leader has given a fresh impetus to mathematics within the school. She quickly made a good evaluation of the subject, and identified appropriate areas to improve, including the school calculation policy.
- The revised framework has been successfully introduced especially with the change in emphasis to using lesson plans to inform the teaching rather than textbooks.
- You have undertaken lesson observations to identify appropriate areas of teaching and learning to develop. There are plans for the subject leader to monitor the implementation of the 'Assessing Pupils' Progress' initiative and the revised calculation policy.

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

- The revised framework, new subject leader and strongly collegiate staff have been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and learning within the school. Good support has been provided by local authority consultants and you have supported teachers to visit leading mathematics teachers in other schools.
- The subject leader has attended appropriate courses and is providing training for teachers and teaching assistants within the school. Courses are linked to performance management and to whole-school priorities.

Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

- Good support is provided for pupils in mixed-age classes so that work is well matched to their needs and abilities and is not repeated unnecessarily.
- Targeted pupils receive effective support through booster classes, twice a week during the spring term. This complements the good teaching they receive within lessons.
- The strong emphasis on 'using and applying mathematics' is consistent across all classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring staff are confident with the subject knowledge required to stretch all pupils
- increasing opportunities for the subject leader to monitor teaching.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector