

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs B Crispin  
Headteacher  
Horrabridge Primary School  
Yelverton  
Devon  
PL20

Dear Mrs Crispin

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 parts of three 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.

- Standards in national tests are broadly average. However, as you have identified, too few pupils are attaining the higher levels. (Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 and Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2.)
- The rate of progress varies across the school. Tracking systems established over the last year have highlighted groups of pupils that are working below age-related expectations. This information is being used well to target extra support to boost their progress and is having a good impact.
- Progress is accelerating in Year 2 and in Years 5 and 6. The proportion of pupils working at Level 5 in Year 6 has increased this year. However, there are still no pupils on course for Level 3 in Year 2.

- Data show that children in the Foundation Stage are making inadequate progress in their mathematical development given their starting points.
- Pupils are generally keen to succeed and work hard in lessons. They occasionally become passive in the introductory parts of lessons if these last too long or if they are not sufficiently involved.
- Year 6 pupils have very good awareness of how well they are doing and what they need to work on next. Higher attainers enjoy a challenge. Those with learning difficulties are very positive about the support that they have received and have gained confidence in their abilities to tackle calculations and problems.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Most lessons have clear objectives that are shared with the pupils. Lessons are generally planned to build on previous learning but there are occasions when too much time is taken revisiting a concept rather than taking learning forward.
- The introduction of the tracking data and work on assessment for learning has heightened awareness of the need for a better adaptation of work to take account of the range of pupils' abilities. This is more successfully embedded for lower attainers, including pupils with learning difficulties, than for those who need a greater challenge.
- There are good examples of all pupils being actively engaged in introductory sessions through recording answers on whiteboards or discussing problem-solving strategies with 'talk partners'. On other occasions, too much time is spent asking individual pupils to respond to questions, the pace of the lesson slows and opportunities are missed to engage all pupils and assess their understanding.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- All teachers are planning to the new primary framework. This has been eagerly embraced, particularly as there was no clear structure for planning previously.
- Thorough analysis of data has identified that pupils' skills in mental methods need to be improved and there is an expectation that this should be a focus in every lesson. Planning and observations show that this is not yet consistently implemented across the school.
- Teachers are beginning to make effective use of interactive whiteboards to demonstrate key concepts and strategies. Use of information and communication technology (ICT) by pupils is very limited.
- Planning for the Foundation Stage shows lack of attention to developing children's mathematical understanding. Activities planned in a session with a mathematical focus sometimes have only a tenuous connection with this area of learning.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Thorough analysis of data from national tests has accurately identified key areas for improvement. This is giving all teachers a clear view of aspects that need particular attention.
- Monitoring and evaluation by the subject leader is at the early stages but there is a clear programme for this over the current year. Scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with pupils have generated useful points for improvement but there has not yet been the opportunity to assess the impact of initiatives to address these.

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

- The improvements in assessment arrangements and data analysis are leading to better awareness of where teaching and learning need to be improved. As outlined above, much of this work is still in the early stages but the direction is right.
- The expertise of the subject leader is being well used, for example, to support colleagues to strengthen lesson planning in Key Stage 2.
- Training issues have been identified and the school is endeavouring to meet these with in-house training led by the subject leader. Severe constraints on the budget are limiting the school's ability to utilise external expertise.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is satisfactory.

- There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to enable them to access the curriculum. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting individuals and small groups.
- Gifted and talented pupils have been recently identified and provision is now being made to meet their needs.
- All curriculum opportunities are available to all pupils. Year 6 pupils are particularly positive about the chance to attend revision sessions where they can revisit any aspects of the subject if they feel insecure.
- Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged in lessons to extend their thinking and apply their skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that more capable pupils make progress at a consistent rate throughout the school
- improving the progress of children in the Foundation Stage by ensuring that suitable opportunities are provided for them to extend their early understanding of mathematics
- extending the use of ICT, to enable all pupils, but particularly the more capable, to make decisions about how to present and interrogate information in a variety of ways
- ensuring that all lessons have suitable pace and challenge and a clear focus on taking learning forward.

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

Shirley Billington  
Additional Inspector