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Mr T Bowden  
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Dear Mr Bowden

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 06 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 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.

- During Nursery and Reception, children make good progress to reach above average standards. In Years 1 and 2, they continue to make good progress and reach standards that rose in 2007 to significantly above average. However, during Key Stage 2 progress is less consistent across year groups; it is often satisfactory in lessons but the good support in Year 6 enables pupils to make good progress overall from Key Stage 1 to 2. The recently improved standards at Key Stage 1 have not had time to permeate through Key Stage 2, where standards reached by the end of Year 6 are broadly average.
- Teaching of Year 6 pupils in separate ability groups for mathematics enabled a high proportion to reach the highest level, Level 5, and meet the school's 2007

target. Careful analysis of reasons for missing the 2007 target for the nationally expected Level 4 have led to improved provision, so that current Year 6 pupils in this ability group are making good progress.

- In some lessons, the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Pupils have a good attitude to learning mathematics in school and towards homework. In lessons, there is occasional distracted behaviour when work does not engage their interest. Pupils collaborate well, with younger ones showing good development of independence as they try hard on a range of mathematical activities.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. It is variable in Key Stage 2 where it is often satisfactory in lessons.
- In the good lessons teachers use their detailed knowledge of the pupils to match interesting activities and questions to their needs. Pupils enjoy this work and find it challenging.
- In the less successful lessons, pupils spend too long listening and the higher ability pupils are not challenged from the outset.
- Feedback to pupils has improved, and the best gives them clear guidance. Some pupils make judgements about how well they have done their work but pupils do not use targets regularly or assess their progress towards them.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- In the Foundation Stage there is a good range of indoor and outdoor activities in a motivating environment. The work in Year 1 provides a very good transition from Reception.
- The scheme of work provides good conceptual underpinning in many areas, but sometimes gaps in teachers' subject knowledge limit its use. Skills in using and applying mathematics are not explicitly developed, so the independence seen lower down the school is not built on well enough during Key Stage 2.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance provision. There is scope to improve systems to ensure that all pupils have hands-on experience across the breadth of the mathematics curriculum.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Through sharp monitoring and evaluation, the new subject leader has quickly obtained an accurate understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses lie. She has contributed well to improvements.
- Analysis of pupils' responses to test questions is being used effectively to focus teaching on weaker areas, such as problem solving.
- The school has rightly identified that assessment of pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels is needed more frequently and has begun to do this.

Use of these data to inform intervention for pupils not meeting the nationally expected levels has now been extended below Year 6. There is room to use the data more effectively with other pupils to enable all pupils to exceed their individual targets and make good progress.

- The action plan includes relevant activities that are already having a positive effect, but does not link well enough to points identified in inspection or evaluation, or include success criteria focussed sufficiently precisely on the impact of the actions.
- After a number of years of focusing on English, the school has recognised that the quality of mathematics teaching in Key Stage 2 has not been raised quickly enough, and targets for pupils' attainment in mathematics have been set as part of performance management.

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

- There is regular observation of lessons with clear feedback of points for development, on some of which improvement has been seen. These identify astutely weaknesses in subject knowledge and use of independent tasks, but often address procedural points rather than the substantial ones needed to raise satisfactory teaching to good.
- Staff with particular strengths, such as in feedback when marking, share these with others, although there remains inconsistency in marking quality.
- The school has successfully trained teaching assistants who have now become competent teachers of mathematics.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

- Teachers in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 use their good knowledge of each pupil to enable them to make good progress.
- Teaching of Year 6 in separate ability groups, and associated revision, met pupils' needs well and had a big impact on results in 2007. The school recognises the need to have greater impact on pupils' progress throughout Key Stage 2.
- A large proportion of pupils reach the highest level in Year 6, although there is still room for them to score higher marks within this level and make better progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising the quality of teaching and learning throughout Key Stage 2, in particular to include more 'using and applying mathematics' for all and increased challenge for the higher attainers
- evaluating progress more frequently using National Curriculum levels and intervening more often to enable all pupils to make good progress throughout the school
- increasing pupils' involvement in self-assessment against regularly set targets
- linking action plans more closely to prior evaluation, with success criteria expressed in terms of impact, to ensure that teaching quality and pupils' progress improve.

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

Gill Close  
Her Majesty's Inspector