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Mr R Warren  
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Dear Mr Warren

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 March 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 parts of six 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.

- Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectations. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and attain above average standards. They do particularly well in number with a significant proportion working in the early stages of the National Curriculum by the start of Year 1. Attainment in shape, space and measures is above average. Use of number for calculation, while broadly average, is not as strong as other aspects of mathematical development.
- Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 and standards are above average overall at the end of Year 2. However, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 3 is broadly in line with national averages and this is rightly identified as an area for improvement.

- In lessons, pupils show very good application in range of practical tasks because these are often stimulating and enable them to use their developing understanding in a meaningful context. Year 2 pupils commented that they enjoy 'maths workshops' because the tasks make them think.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Good strategies are used to engage pupils and extend their learning. These include demonstrations of key ideas using the interactive whiteboards and imaginative use of resources. Use of 'talk partners' and individual whiteboards enables pupils to share ideas and demonstrate their understanding.
- Teachers are generally clear about what they want pupils to learn. However, learning objectives are sometimes very broad and this leads to lessons occasionally lacking a clear focus on the specific mathematical concepts that need to be understood or used by the pupils.
- Assessment is used well to target the next steps in learning. Marking gives pupils a good view of what they have learned and what they need to concentrate on next.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The new primary framework is being successfully implemented. The subject leader has devised a clear structure to guide medium term planning with a strong focus on skills development.
- Provision for 'using and applying mathematics' is being strengthened through the introduction of weekly 'maths workshops'. These promote collaborative working and incorporate all areas of mathematics. Although still in the early stages, there are good examples of how these sessions are extending pupils' skills in problem solving.
- There are excellent arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties. Progress for pupils on intervention programmes is good. There is also an increased focus on providing additional support and extension activities for more able pupils. This has led to accelerated progress for a significant proportion of Year 2 pupils over the past year.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- A range of monitoring and evaluation activities are used to check on strengths and weaknesses of provision. The school has accurately identified the key areas for improvement. Detailed action plans are in place but these lack specific and measurable targets to evaluate the impact of the work that is done.
- The subject leader took up post in September 2007 and her expertise is already being used well. She is playing a key role in leading developments in planning and in strengthening provision for 'using and applying mathematics'.

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

- There is a good range of strategies in place to further strengthen teaching and learning. These include specific training on areas such as problem solving and questioning skills. The impact of this training has not yet been evaluated.
- Lesson observations have focused on mathematics this term and these indicate key areas for improvement for individual teachers. Teachers are positive about the feedback that they get, to the extent of organising further peer observations to share good practice.
- The school has identified the need to strengthen teachers' expertise in terms of sharpening the focus on pupils' conceptual development. Steps are being taken to address this through adaptation of planning to highlight key areas of learning in lessons.

Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

- There are very good arrangements to support the diverse needs of pupils, including the high proportion learning English as an additional language.
- The progress of individual and specific groups of pupils is regularly reviewed and support is used flexibly so that it can be targeted to areas of greatest need.
- Additional teacher time has been allocated to support more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 to increase the level of challenge for these groups.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that children in the Foundation Stage achieve as well in using number for calculations as they do in other aspects of their mathematical development
- extending the level of challenge, particularly in 'using and applying mathematics', in order to increase the proportion of pupils attaining Level 3 at the end of Year 2
- refining learning objectives so that these are sharply focused and inform teaching in every lesson
- ensuring that action plans have clear and measurable targets so that success can be evaluated.

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