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Mr B Crowther  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Crowther

Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 27 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, observation of two lessons and visits to five further lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject, mathematics, was judged to be satisfactory.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics has improved and is satisfactory. Standards are average.

- In 2007 standards at Key Stage 2 were around the national average after being below average for two years. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 was low. The school's data indicate that a higher proportion will reach Level 5 this year and that standards will continue to rise. Standards attained by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above the average for pupils with similar needs.
- Achievement improved in 2007 and was satisfactory.

- The progress made by pupils in lessons is at least satisfactory and sometimes good.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory with some good features.

- Teachers use effective questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding and tease out any misconceptions. Most pupils respond enthusiastically and are keen to learn.
- Lessons are well planned and include a good range of activities that engage and maintain pupils' interest. Some teachers are becoming skilled at tailoring activities to meet the differing needs within each group and in the best lessons pupils are set different tasks depending on their ability. However, this is not yet a consistent feature of the teaching.
- Pupils are effectively involved in assessing their own progress. They know their individual targets and they monitor progress towards them using a list of easily understood criteria in the front of their books. They find the targets and criteria helpful.
- The quality of marking varies too much. There are examples of excellent practice where pupils are given very helpful feedback that links to their individual targets but some marking is cursory with few comments.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Information and communications technology (ICT) is used well to support the curriculum. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards and the computer suite to enhance pupils' understanding. Learning materials and schemes of work are easily accessed on the teachers' network along with a range of useful reports showing pupils' progress.
- Pupils enjoy using ICT and say that it helps them to learn. They particularly enjoy mathematical games which have improved their skills in mental arithmetic. Pupils also appreciate being able to access extra revision material at home.
- Curriculum planning is effective and the school has made good progress in improving the mathematics curriculum over the last two years. Barriers to learning have been carefully identified and strategies developed to overcome the difficulties.
- The mathematics co-ordinator has used external training events, links with regional networks and help from the local authority to provide effective guidance and support for teachers as they implement the revised numeracy framework.
- Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and intervention strategies are put in place where appropriate. An extra set has been introduced in Year 6 to tackle under-performance.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Performance management is strong. The mathematics co-ordinator carries out audits each term, lessons are formally observed by the senior leadership team and the headteacher drops into lessons on a regular basis. Findings are shared with staff and discussed.
- Leaders and managers know the department well and are able to use their knowledge to plan very effectively. Over the course of a year the mathematics co-ordinator teaches most groups and uses the opportunity to find out more about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.
- The database that tracks pupils' progress is effective and highlights concerns quickly enabling teachers and managers to take swift action if necessary. Managers monitor the progress of individuals and vulnerable groups of pupils. They are also making increasing use of the data to compare the performance of different teaching groups.
- The local authority has provided an excellent range of training and consultancy to support the development of the department.

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

The school has effectively improved teaching and learning in mathematics over the last two years. At the last inspection, early in 2006, mathematics teachers were aiming work at the average pupil in the class which meant that tasks were too easy for some and too hard for others. A great deal of work has been done to rectify this. Local authority advisors have provided bespoke training sessions for all staff and they have worked alongside individual teachers to address issues that have been identified as a priority. Advanced skills teachers from the authority have also provided training. Good progress has been made.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good.

The school monitors the progress of all the vulnerable groups of pupils. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do especially well. Learning support is good and support assistants are deployed effectively. The school caters well for the growing number of bilingual pupils. Pupils are taught in ability sets and activities in class are matched to pupils' ability ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged and the less able pupils are not left behind.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continue to improve achievement and raise standards, in particular, increase the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5
- improve the overall quality of marking and feedback to match that of the best.

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

Jan Bennett  
Her Majesty's Inspector