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Mr J Smith  
Headteacher  
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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 and pupils, during my visit on 08 April 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 three other 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.

- Achievement improved and standards have risen over the last three years.
- The progress made in most lessons is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils have productive discussions about their ideas and methods that improve understanding.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers structure lessons well and include a good variety of interesting activities. Effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) enhances learning and practical tasks are utilised well to augment understanding.
- Behaviour is good, allowing pupils to focus on their work. Teachers have good organisation and management skills enabling pupils to move smoothly from one activity to the next without wasting any time.
- In the most successful lessons, teachers take care to check the understanding of every individual. In other lessons, however, pupils escape their teachers' attention by sitting quietly and not participating fully.
- The excellent range of carefully tailored tasks is a strong feature of almost every lesson. The tasks are matched well to pupils' differing levels of understanding and help children of all abilities to make progress.
- Marking is thorough and linked to pupils' targets. Written feedback is detailed and helpful and praise and encouragement are given.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- There is good provision for the most able pupils. They are set challenging tasks in lessons and there are opportunities to work with gifted and talented pupils from other local schools. There is a weekly club for the most able pupils in Year 6 that develops their thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well catered for with a good range of intervention strategies and effective support in lessons.
- ICT is used well to enhance the curriculum.
- Pupils say that teachers are available outside lesson time to give extra help if necessary. There is good support for Year 6 pupils as they prepare for their national tests.
- Plans to integrate numeracy across the curriculum are progressing well and further developments are scheduled. Pupils are encouraged to apply their mathematics in different situations and they enjoy working on practical tasks.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress are robust and the analysis is used well.
- Performance management is good and managers know the area very well. There are frequent lesson observations by senior managers and the subject leader also observes lessons. Pupils' work and lesson plans are scrutinised on a regular basis by the subject leader and records show improvements have been made as a result. Test results are carefully analysed and action is taken when any areas concern are identified.
- The subject leader has drive and enthusiasm and is constantly looking for ways to improve the provision. Since her appointment and the school's involvement in the local authority's Improving Schools Initiative (ISI), leading to Intensifying Support Programme (ISP), teachers work together much more effectively as a team by sharing ideas and resources.

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

The school is effectively improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a lead teacher with the local authority, the subject leader is kept abreast of new developments and is able to bring back good practice from other schools. The ISP consultants' work alongside staff has made a key contribution to improving the quality of teaching. In addition, information gathered during lesson observations and the more thorough analysis of data enables managers to target training effectively.

### Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is good. In the vast majority of lessons, work is set at different levels to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. Teaching assistants work very closely with teachers and provide good support enabling pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to work effectively. The progress of the most able pupils is tracked carefully and any under-achievement is addressed. Data are analysed thoroughly and the progress of vulnerable groups is monitored well. Results of national tests in 2007 show no difference between the standards attained by boys and girls. Nevertheless, the school continues to monitor any differences lower down the school and takes action where necessary.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- checking the understanding of every individual pupil in lessons in order to improve achievement further
- improving the quality of all teaching and learning 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