

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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



26 June 2008

Ms C Gundry  
Headteacher  
St George CE Primary School  
Queens Parade  
Bristol  
BS1 5XJ

Dear Ms Gundry

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 24 June 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 yourself and the subject leader, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of four lessons. Year 5 and 6 pupils were on a residential visit but a sample of Year 6 work and records showing pupils' progress were scrutinised. Discussions were held with a small group of Year 4 pupils.

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

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and standards are average.

- Results of national tests vary considerably because of the small number in each cohort and the significant proportion of pupils that enter or leave each year. The tracking data on pupils who have sustained experience in the school indicates that progress is satisfactory, although there is some variation across year groups and for different groups of pupils.
- Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and the majority are working securely within the early learning goals at the end of the Reception Year.

This good base is not built on as effectively as it might be and progress slows in Year 1 but picks up again in Year 2.

- Pupils with learning difficulties and those who join the school at other than the usual times benefit from well-targeted support and make satisfactory, and sometimes good, gains, albeit in small steps. More able pupils do not always make progress at the rate that they should and this results in only a small number attaining the higher levels in national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils interviewed had mixed views about mathematics. They were generally positive about opportunities to play number games on the computer. They find problems 'hard'. The school is currently focusing on improving pupils' understanding of subject specific vocabulary in order to improve their confidence and skills in tackling problems.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Learning objectives are clear and usually shared with pupils. Lessons are based on prior learning and teachers make pupils aware of the knowledge that they can bring to new tasks. Interactive whiteboards and other resources are used well for demonstration and to help pupils understand the tasks they are going to be working on. Key vocabulary is identified in planning but is not always displayed and used as effectively as it might be.
- Opportunities are missed in oral mathematics sessions to ensure that all pupils are engaged in working out answers through, for example, using small whiteboards or number fans. Responses come from individuals and this reduces teachers' capacity assess pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. A significant number of pupils are passive in these sessions and at times 'switch off', thus potentially missing key elements of learning.
- Tasks are well organised but do not always take account of the wide variation in abilities in each class. At times, work is too easy for more able pupils who mark time working at something that they have already grasped. For pupils with learning difficulties, tasks are not always modified enough to take account of slower work rates.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from an imaginative range of activities that promotes their understanding of early aspects of mathematics and enables them to use and apply their learning.
- Over the past year, the curriculum has been modified so that the new primary framework is now in use throughout the school. There have been further adjustments to planning to take account of mixed-age classes. Although there has been no formal evaluation of the impact so far, initial feedback from staff is positive.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support teaching but is not yet embedded as a resource for learning. There are, however, some good examples of its use in displays of work on 'environment day' where pupils devised a variety of graphs to show means of travel to school.

## Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Mathematics has not been a priority area over the past two years as there has been a whole-school focus on improving boys' writing. Nevertheless, the subject leader has been active in checking on pupils' performance and leading the implementation of the new framework. The impact of the work done has yet to be seen in terms of bringing about an improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Thorough analysis of data from a variety of tests and scrutiny of planning and pupils' work contribute to plans for improvement. Action plans identify the need to improve pupils' progress, but do not include specific targets that would enable the school to assess the effectiveness of the work done.
- The school has correctly identified the need to improve pupils' understanding of subject specific vocabulary and their skills in calculation in order to improve their capacity to apply their knowledge of mathematics.

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

- All staff have received training on the new primary framework during this year. This training has been supplemented by staff meetings led by the subject leader to discuss, for example, adaptation of planning and aspects of the curriculum that need a particular focus.
- All teachers have been observed once during this year and helpful feedback given to individuals. However, the information has not yet been collated to give an overview of the quality of teaching and to identify key strengths and aspects for improvement.
- While the school has identified the need to improve provision for using and applying mathematics, there has been no specific training related to this. Local authority training has been focused on number and calculation and the introduction of the new framework.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing closer links between the Foundation Stage and Year 1 so that children's knowledge and skills at the end of the Reception Year are extended and their progress is sustained at a consistent rate
- ensuring that more able pupils make progress at a faster rate in order to increase the proportion attaining higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6
- developing a range of strategies to increase pupils' involvement in the introductory parts of lessons so that they are all actively engaged in learning and teachers are able to assess their understanding
- improving the focus on mathematical vocabulary in lessons so that it is prominently displayed and teachers consistently draw attention to key terms and encourage support staff and pupils to use these accurately to explain ideas.

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