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30 June 2008

Mr A Lamb
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Dear Mr Lamb

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 25 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of seven lessons and two lunchtime clubs.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good and standards are broadly in line with the national average in the main school.

- Pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school to meet challenging targets.
- They thoroughly enjoy mathematics lessons because teachers make them interesting and engage pupils successfully in learning.
- The school offers specialist provision for pupils with profound, severe and complex learning needs, including those with autism and learning difficulties. These pupils achieve well because teachers personalise their learning and plan a good variety of 'hands-on' activities.

- In the main school, pupils demonstrate good problem-solving and investigative skills. They work systematically, investigate possibilities and present their findings clearly.
- Some pupils find it difficult to explain their reasoning because of limitations in their language and communication skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Collaborative planning ensures consistency of approaches throughout the school and the specialist provision. Teachers make effective use of assessment information when planning lessons to ensure that activities match pupils' widely differing needs.
- The strong emphasis on practical learning set in real-life contexts enables pupils to develop a good understanding of mathematical concepts and their relevance to everyday life.
- Well-targeted questions probe pupils' understanding and extend their knowledge and skills.
- In many lessons, effective use of interactive whiteboards provides a helpful visual dimension to learning, while opportunities to discuss ideas with a partner reinforce pupils' understanding. In a few lessons, there are missed opportunities to use both of these strategies to enhance learning.
- Teachers' marking is thorough and shows pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of pupils in the mainstream classes and the specialist provision. Two-way integration ensures that all pupils have access to a curriculum that meets their individual needs.
- The school is currently exploring innovative ways to make links with other subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils are participating in a science project with other local schools that involves taking measurements and creating charts and graphs. Some of this work is at relatively early stage of development.
- Excellent enrichments to the core curriculum generate great enthusiasm for mathematics. Lunchtime Clubs and the whole school 'Birthday Candle Challenge' extend and enrich pupils' skills and show them that mathematics is fun.
- Problem solving and investigations are integral to pupils' learning and are set in contexts that pupils can easily relate to. For example, Year 6 pupils were carrying out an investigation that centred on ticket sales and seating arrangements for their end-of-term production.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The senior leadership team has considerable expertise and provides a firm steer for the development of teaching and learning in mathematics.

- The three subject co-ordinators work closely together to ensure continuity and consistency of approaches throughout the main school and the specialist provision.
- Rigorous data analysis identifies key priorities for improvement and this in turn feeds in to professional development opportunities for all staff.
- There are good systems for tracking each pupil's progress. Leaders in the specialist provision have devised effective procedures for measuring the very small steps of progress made by pupils with profound, severe and complex learning needs.
- As the school's main focus has been on reading and writing, it has not recently carried out a thorough evaluation of the impact of teaching and new initiatives on the quality of pupils' learning in mathematics. (This is planned for the start of the next school year.)

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

- There are good training opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants that help to improve their knowledge and skills.
- 'Learning to learn' is central to the school's approaches to improving the quality of teaching.
- Advanced Skills Teachers have successfully worked alongside staff to develop their skills.
- Participation in a local cluster 'Innovation Project' is having a positive impact on developing teachers' skills in investigative mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- implementing the plans to monitor the impact of recent initiatives in teaching mathematics with a rigorous focus on evaluating their impact on the quality of learning.

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

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector