

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



20 July 2008

Miss Cheryl MacLeod
Headteacher
Nazeing Primary School
Hyde Mead
Nazeing
Waltham Abbey
Essex
EN9 2HS

Dear Miss McLeod

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 8 July 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 evidence used to inform the judgements included teacher and pupil interviews, scrutiny of pupils' work and relevant documentation, and four lesson observations.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good and standards are average.

- The school aims to teach mathematics in ways that promote understanding. As a result, pupils enjoy the subject and expect it to make sense.
- Pupils' progress is satisfactory when measured by test results, but their achievement is good because they make very good progress in understanding, using and applying mathematics. A good balance is struck between developing pupils' understanding and preparing them for the end of key stage assessments.
- The school has developed an effective target setting and tracking system to help pupils to make progress in number, algebra, shape and space, and data handling. While revision sessions and extra classes for those falling behind

contribute to the school's improving mathematics results, these aspects are not over-played, so mathematics remains enjoyable.

- Learning support is well planned, particularly in the Foundation Stage, where adults work alongside groups of pupils, endeavouring to exploit learning opportunities as they arise.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Teaching and learning are good because the lessons are designed to help pupils develop the conceptual understanding that underpins learning. For example, pupils were provided with realistic clocks where the hands moved in unison. This helped them to see that the hour hand moves to the half-way point between the numbers by half-past the hour. Similarly, pupils were encouraged to use number line imagery to support mental arithmetic.
- A good feature, seen in all lessons, is the availability of different levels of work to meet pupils' varying needs. Another strong aspect of teaching and learning is the growing focus on using and applying mathematics. Occasionally, however, teachers or teaching assistants start giving clues before pupils have had time to think things through for themselves. This reduces pupils' opportunities for working out their own strategies for solving problems.
- Teachers identify emerging difficulties and misconceptions by careful observation of pupils as they work. They make time well for this informal assessment during lessons by planning for pupils to engage in some independent work. They then adapt their teaching satisfactorily on the basis of this assessment. However, fine points of mathematical detail are sometimes overlooked.
- Marking is regular and conscientious, but not always diagnostic because teachers sometimes miss subtle clues about pupils' misconceptions.
- Teachers have good general teaching skills supported by satisfactory, and in some cases good, mathematics-specific teaching skills. The school's self-evaluation rates teachers' mathematical subject knowledge as good. The inspection found that subject knowledge is satisfactory and improving.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Teachers understand and accept the school's philosophy that mathematics lessons should help pupils to make sense of mathematical concepts as well as teaching them specific methods and skills. However, this philosophy is not explicitly encouraged in the curriculum documentation.
- The curriculum is inclusive, providing all pupils with regular access to computer programmes that support learning and with frequent opportunities to learn how to use and apply mathematics. The school works closely with parents of pupils with learning difficulties, for example through a games-loan programme which helps parents to support their children at home. The provision for more able pupils is helping to extend their thinking skills and their ability to explain.
- Teachers are expected to be flexible in their use of the scheme of work to give time for pupils' understanding to develop.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The good subject leadership is an important factor in the school's improving mathematics results. It results in an ethos where all staff think about how to convey mathematical ideas, not just how to deliver instruction. For example, the subject leader has provided colleagues with guidance on the new framework materials but trusts them to take responsibility for revitalising their own teaching.
- As headteacher, you evaluate teaching and learning well. You accurately identify the generic qualities of good teaching and can pinpoint mathematical details that matter, such as the use of realistic clocks in the teaching of time. Your observations pay good regard to pupils' views about the lesson.
- Although, in practice, lesson observations focus well on learning, the lesson monitoring form does not prompt to observers to evaluate pupils' progress.

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

- You gave examples of specific changes in mathematics that have arisen from the programme of monitoring and evaluation. When good practice is observed, there are effective arrangements to share the ideas in staff meetings. This ad hoc arrangement brings benefits, but does not result in a systematic review of teaching approaches.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have opportunities to request professional development. As headteacher you gain an overview of training needs that allows professional development to be focused accordingly.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that, when you next review the relevant documents, the scheme of work includes explicit references to the philosophy of teaching for understanding, and lesson observation forms include a prompt to evaluate learning
- adopting a more systematic approach to reviewing best practice in mathematics teaching, perhaps by focusing on the progression of ideas from the foundation stage to Year 6 in particular strands of learning, or by looking at one year group at a time
- focusing future professional development in mathematics on increasing the depth of teachers' subject knowledge and their expertise in assessment.

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

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector