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Mrs C Stevens
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Dear Mrs Stevens

Ofsted 2008-09 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 September 2008 to look at work in mathematics. This letter confirms the verbal feedback that I provided at the end of the visit.

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 pupils, teachers and a local authority adviser, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and standards are below average.

- Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 were well below average in each of the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 and remained below average in 2008, despite the satisfactory progress made in Year 6. This is because the pupils concerned made had fallen behind when they were younger.
- The school's own assessment records indicate that standards are improving because pupils are now making satisfactory progress. The school's improvement targets are within reach because younger pupils are no longer falling behind.
- The school has correctly identified that weaknesses in the recall of number bonds and multiplication facts are a barrier for many pupils. In addition, pupils' ability to

use and apply their knowledge of mathematics is weakened because their understanding of mathematical concepts is underdeveloped.

- The school is also addressing the relatively weaker achievement of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities by providing support for their numeracy as well as their literacy. More detailed assessment is allowing support to be matched more closely to pupils' different needs.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Since taking over as headteacher in 2006, you have made sure that lessons are adequately planned, that work is marked regularly and that pupils' behaviour is managed consistently. Most pupils are now enjoying mathematics lessons and they say that the improved behaviour in lessons allows them to learn better.
- Assessment is improving as teachers mark conscientiously. They are getting better at assessing pupils' understanding while the lesson is in progress, but sometimes miss the signs that their lesson plan might need to be adapted.
- As you acknowledge, there is room to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of the 'big ideas' of mathematics and of how children learn mathematics. One teacher told me that she had learnt a lot from discussing the teaching of mathematics with colleagues.
- Teachers now have greater direct involvement with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for these pupils has also been improved by more consistent deployment of teaching assistants and better liaison between teachers and their assistants.
- Teaching assistants work well when supporting pupils who are working in groups, but they do not always have a clear role when the teacher is working with the whole class.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The mathematics scheme of work makes extensive use of materials and guidance from the National Primary Strategy. It is being adapted to take into account the recently revised guidance.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning of mathematics is underdeveloped.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently well adapted to take into account the pupils' prior learning and lower-than-average prior attainment.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- You have raised expectations in the school. You are developing the school as a 'learning community' where children expect to learn and to enjoy learning and where adults see themselves as lifelong learners.
- There are two principal reasons for the improved progress indicated earlier. One is the school's liaison work with its infant school partners, which is addressing issues that had slowed progress in mathematics. The other is the rigorous

evaluation and robust leadership you and your senior team have provided since you took over as headteacher in 2006, leading to improved teaching.

- You have taken a direct role in the leadership of mathematics but recognise that this is not a sustainable long-term strategy. You are sensibly seeking to build greater capacity for mathematics leadership among your staff.

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

- The school improvement plan includes an audit of training needs. The local authority is helping teachers to improve their subject expertise in mathematics.
- Much of the recent improvement in teaching has been the result of professional development that is generic rather than subject-focused. This was a necessary starting point, but now needs to be supplemented by greater attention to mathematics-specific issues.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that mathematics plays a strong role in the 'learning community' by further developing teachers' subject knowledge and teaching expertise in mathematics
- ensuring that teaching approaches are well matched to the relevant mathematical concepts and are guided by teachers' contemporaneous assessments of pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding
- Adapting the curriculum to take better account of pupils' starting points, to make greater use of ICT and to reflect the improved liaison with the infants' school.

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