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Mr M Chappel  
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Dear Mr Chappel

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 18 September 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 children, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

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

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and standards are broadly average.

- Children join the school with a wide range of prior attainment. Recent years have seen improvements in standards and progress in mathematics but this has not been consistent across year groups and there have been some dips. The provisional results for 2008 suggest a rise in attainment at Key Stage 2 where it had previously been below average. They indicate improved progress between Key Stages 1 and 2. Whilst some pupils make good progress there are others who do not; they attain at the same level for too long. Such pupils do not have any one common defining characteristic, such as gender.

- The school's focus on thinking is starting to improve pupils' use of mathematics in cross-curricular projects and in problems within the subject itself, and to develop their independence in mathematics.
- Pupils work very hard, collaborating keenly on activities. They enjoy learning mathematics, but sometimes lose interest when work is too hard or too easy.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed. Many lessons are lively, containing carefully planned activities with good opportunities for collaborative work, solving practical problems and discussion. Pupils respond conscientiously, answering questions and keeping on task. In the Foundation Stage, they are engaged calmly and purposefully in activities, with helpful support for their learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.
- Pupils make good progress in some lessons, but in others they make only satisfactory progress because they do not spend long enough doing challenging work that advances their understanding. Sometimes this is because they all spend too long listening to the same explanation. At other times the work they are given to do in groups is too hard or too easy, or the teacher does not adapt it soon enough in response to their progress on it. In some lessons, there is not a clear enough development of the mathematical concept being taught for pupils to understand it, although they can actually carry out some of the activities they are given.
- Pupils make useful assessments of each others' work and of how well they are doing in lessons. This helps them to improve, but they do not judge how well they are progressing through the range of mathematical knowledge and understanding in the National Curriculum. The school is rightly continuing to build on its firm base to improve assessment.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The whole school focus on learning, embodied in the cross-curricular project work, is beginning to have an impact on the mathematics curriculum, which includes investigatory activities. Pupils also learn mathematics through the project work and apply it in many school activities although the schemes of work do not include a structured development of skills for using and applying mathematics.
- Some good activities help to build pupils' understanding of concepts but there is no guidance in the schemes of work to ensure that all pupils are taught to carry out these activities in ways that enhance their understanding.
- There are many stimulating activities on the interactive whiteboard but pupils do not all have hands-on opportunities to use information and communication technology across the breadth of the mathematics curriculum.
- Provision is targeted effectively to support pupils with learning, social or emotional difficulties. Pupils whose attainment is below national expectations receive focused help outside lessons, which has led to appropriate improvement for many although not consistently.

## Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Staff are very committed to the school's vision of leading and learning together, and to developing pupils' thinking skills. There is a marked drive for raising standards and developing strong teaching skills. The staff provide a good resource for the school.
- This year, the school's leadership and management structure has changed away from subject co-ordination so responsibility for mathematics lies with the leader of the thinking team and leaders of the four age phases. Systems for monitoring, evaluating and enhancing the provision of mathematics in this new structure are developing.
- The school's leaders have an accurate view of the overall quality of provision in mathematics. Draft development planning identifies appropriate actions but, at this early stage, it does not include clear priorities or measurable outcomes expressed in terms of impact.
- Leaders have raised teaching quality through observation of lessons. There is room for a sharper focus on pupils' understanding and progress to raise teaching quality further.
- Pupils' attainment is tracked regularly and support provided where a need is identified, but its impact is not evaluated sharply enough. The school recognises that there are improvements to be made to show more clearly any underachievement against targets throughout each year group.

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

- The whole school focus on learning is raising the quality of teaching in mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the emphasis on understanding concepts and on ensuring that each pupil spends long enough being challenged by work of appropriate difficulty
- involving pupils further in assessing how well they understand their work and how their attainment against the content of the National Curriculum is developing
- using the tracking and target-setting system more effectively to pinpoint any underachievement across the attainment range and inform support
- focusing lesson observation, evaluation of provision, and development planning more sharply on key priorities to increase pupils' progress.

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

Gill Close  
Her Majesty's Inspector