

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



15 October 2008

Mr C England
Headteacher
Stanley Primary School
Wordsworth Avenue
Blackpool
FY3 9UT

Dear Mr England

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 October 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and standards are average.

- According to assessment records, children's attainment in mathematics is below that expected for their age when they enter school. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception year their attainment has improved but is still below that expected for their age.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 their attainment is slightly below average.
- Pupils' achievement has improved, particularly in Key Stage 2. This is because pupils' progress is carefully tracked and targets are set to help them improve further. The vast majority of pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress and standards by the end of Year 6 are average and rising.

- Pupils' calculation skills are secure but they experience difficulty in using and applying their knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems in new contexts.
- The achievement of more able pupils and those who experience difficulties in learning mathematics is improving because lessons and additional activities are now better tailored to their learning needs than they have been in the past.
- Pupils have good attitudes to mathematics. They enjoy lessons and often say that 'Learning is fun.' They present their work carefully and work cooperatively with partners and in groups.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers use a good variety of practical activities, games and visual aids, which make learning interesting and mathematics enjoyable.
- Teachers are successful in developing pupils' mathematical vocabulary.
- The aims of the lesson are made very clear. Consequently, pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn.
- Teaching and learning are improving because many aspects of assessment have been strengthened. Teachers are increasingly identifying pupils' starting points accurately, providing work matched to their different learning needs and marking their completed work constructively to help them to take the next steps in their learning.
- Lesson planning does not always focus sufficiently on developing pupils' conceptual understanding.
- Although assessment is used well to identify what pupils have understood over time, it is not used well enough in some lessons to diagnose and correct pupils' misconceptions and this slows down their progress. In the best lessons, teachers ask pupils to show them their answers and ideas using mini-white boards and move the lesson forward briskly once it is clear that all pupils understand.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The school has implemented the strategy of the revised framework for mathematics very effectively. As a result, pupils have valuable opportunities to use and apply their knowledge and skills.
- The school has taken steps to ensure that pupils now build upon what they have learned earlier and they are encouraged to think more creatively.
- Pupils have timetabled lessons during which their mathematical knowledge and skills are enhanced by information and communication technology (ICT). However, classroom computers are not used as extensively as they could be.
- The school is providing increasingly effective support for pupils who find mathematics difficult. Provision for the most able pupils is also improving through additional activities arranged specially for them.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Achievement and standards are improving because leaders are monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress very carefully and strengthening areas of weakness.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils and their parents are kept well informed about the school's provision and expectations in mathematics and how their efforts can make a difference.
- The involvement of the local authority's consultant is having a notable impact on the achievement of the most able pupils.
- Processes for checking and improving the quality of teaching are still not focussed sufficiently on identifying the extent to which teaching increases pupils' conceptual understanding.

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

- National initiatives are drawing attention to the important aspects of teaching and learning, such as the development of pupils' mathematical vocabulary and setting pupils meaningful targets to help them improve. Training sessions have led to improvement in these areas.
- Some teachers have good expertise in the teaching of mathematics. They appreciate the difficulties that pupils are likely to encounter and use this knowledge to move their learning on. This expertise is used well within year groups but not sufficiently between year groups to benefit all teachers and pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' capacity to use and apply their knowledge and skills, particularly with regard to the use of ICT, to raise achievement further
- teachers paying more attention to pupils' errors and misconceptions in lessons and using these to improve pupils' understanding
- sharing the good practice that already exists within school to improve every teachers' subject knowledge.

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

Colin Smith
Additional Inspector