Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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

raising standards
improving lives

06 November 2008

Mrs H Laher
Headteacher
Spring Grove Primary
Bow Street
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD1 4BJ

Dear Mrs Laher

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 3 November 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 five lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding and standards are well above average.

- Children's mathematical development on entry is lower than is typical of children aged 3 to 4 years. Many of them speak very little English; their communication and social skills are weak. They make good progress and gain in confidence in the Foundation Stage because they are encouraged to talk and work things out for themselves by a good number of highly trained staff.
- Standards are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. This is reflected consistently in the school's assessments and results of national tests. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve very well overall because teaching focuses strongly on developing understanding and accurate use of language, including that of mathematics.

- Much of the teaching is heavily dependent on oral work. This is effective because pupils are encouraged to explain what they are doing, both to the teacher and to each other. Consequently, pupils gain confidence and self-esteem: they learn from their mistakes and are not afraid to try alternative approaches when they meet with difficulty.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is outstanding.

- Teaching is consistently good or better throughout the school. Pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations by listening carefully, following instructions and using their initiative in open-ended work. The tasks set for the different ability groups in each class are relevant and inspiring; they start at the point of pupils' prior learning and avoid needless repetition.
- The warm, well-disciplined environment in the classrooms is conducive to very good learning. Lessons are conducted at a good pace such that every pupil is gainfully employed and suitably stretched throughout. This is because well-trained teachers and teaching assistants plan the work together and work cohesively as a team during whole-class discussions and practical activities.
- Assessment procedures are rigorous and analytical. In addition to informing planning for lessons well, they lead to short, sharp bursts of support for individuals or groups of pupils who are in danger of underachieving.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is stimulating and flexible. High priority is given to the integral development of pupils' language, communication and mathematical skills. The school is innovative and effective in seeking ways of weaving mathematics and information and communication technology into cross-curricular work in all subjects.
- A good start has been made in providing pupils with regular opportunities for problem solving and investigative work in the subject. Pupils say that they enjoy this type of work and were seen to do so in the lessons observed. More opportunities are needed however for this type of work.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- The high quality of leadership and management directly influences the progress of every pupil. Pupils' limited language skills on entry are seen as a challenge to be overcome rather than a reason for the slowing down of progress. Proactive teaching encourages pupils to develop their understanding of English so that they are better able to apply it to interpreting what is required of them in mathematics.
- Self-critical evaluation triggers a rapid response to identified areas of weakness, which, in turn, leads to teachers and pupils knowing exactly what steps to take to improve learning. Tactical deployment of staff results in pupils of all abilities regularly having opportunities to work in small, flexible working groups separate

from the main class. This arrangement is very effective; it spreads well-targeted support for all pupils across their time in school rather than heavily loading them with extra work at the end of the key stages.

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

- The school has disseminated information from various sources, including the latest Ofsted report on mathematics, and compared recommendations with its own practices. It has been selective in identifying those that could benefit its pupils. The committed approach of the teachers and teaching assistants to tackling new initiatives emanates from their involvement in the process from start to finish.
- Ongoing refinements to the assessment system are influencing well how teachers plan to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Currently, for example, information about specific difficulties encountered by older pupils in measuring and using scales is being filtered down to sharpen practice in all classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- broadening the contexts for and approaches to problem-solving activities to extend further pupils' understanding of how mathematics impacts on their everyday life, now and in the future.

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

June Tracey
Additional Inspector