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Mrs A M Barnett  
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Dear Mrs Barnett

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 10 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 you, the chair of governors, a teacher from the partner secondary school, and two groups of pupils. I scrutinised relevant documentation, analysed pupils' work and observed five lessons.

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

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good. Standards are above average.

- The small numbers in each year group mean that statistical comparisons with national data are difficult to make. Nevertheless, the patterns in results over time have been consistent, and reflect standards that are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. The unvalidated results of the 2008 Key Stage 2 tests show that all the pupils reached at least Level 4, the standard expected by age 11, and two thirds attained Level 5.
- By considering each pupil individually, it is clear they achieve well from their varied starting points, boys particularly so. Pupils who have learning difficulties

and/or disabilities often make very good progress in mathematics as well as in their personal development.

- Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are friendly and cooperative in lessons and around the school; there is a supportive sense of family in each of the mixed-age classes.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good overall.

- Relationships are a strength of the school: staff know the pupils well and cater for their varied needs. Teachers are well organised and lessons run smoothly.
- Teachers' questioning is good: they made the most of pupils' responses to make teaching points and asked follow-up questions to probe understanding.
- Good use of information and communication technology (ICT) was observed in two of the lessons.
- Teachers annotate the lesson plans to indicate particular successes or difficulties experienced by individuals or groups of pupils. Although learning is evaluated thus, intended learning could be defined more precisely and objectives shared meaningfully with pupils to involve them more in assessing their learning.
- Although pupils generally listened attentively to their teachers, they were less good at listening to each other. Occasionally, when pupils spent long periods listening to the teacher, some low-level chatter and fidgeting ensued.
- Teaching assistants supported pupils well in a range of mathematical activities but their role was sometimes too passive during whole-class teaching.
- Teachers' assessment records are effective for keeping track of pupils' progress. Reports to parents contain useful mathematical detail but do not specify the standard at which their child is working. That information is discussed at meetings with parents.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well but there is nevertheless scope to develop it further. Strengths include an emphasis on practical approaches, use of ICT, and cross-curricular links. Extra-curricular activities include residential opportunities and extended enrichment tasks for the higher attaining pupils.
- A teacher from the partner secondary school, a specialist mathematics and computing college, works fortnightly with older pupils on investigative activities. Better use could be made of this to develop teachers' expertise in using and applying mathematics.
- The school makes good use of published activities to promote pupils' mathematical thinking skills, although there is not always enough clarity about the potential learning outcomes.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- In your role as subject leader, you have a clear overview of the attainment and progress of each pupil in the school. All the teachers keep well organised

assessment and curricular records and there is good transfer of information from one teacher to the next.

- The small size of the school lends itself to informal modes of monitoring in the main and which are manageable given the demands of your teaching commitment. You know the school well and your evaluation of the quality of provision is accurate. Reports to governors aid development planning.
- Professional development opportunities are utilised thoughtfully. Staff are generally reflective about their practice; two are involved in action research and master's level study.
- The school has not yet made progress with improving the use of the outside area for the youngest pupils. This was identified as the sole improvement point at the school's last inspection. While this is a challenge, given the nature of the site, it remains an important aspect for development if outdoor play is to be an integral part of pupils' learning experiences.

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

- There is a good level of professional discussion between the close knit team of staff, but no explicit drive to improve teaching and learning in mathematics. While the mathematics policy reflects approaches that emphasise the development of pupils' understanding, some teachers are more skilled in planning for this than others.
- Formal observations of teaching for performance management purposes have led to appropriate points for improvement, although they are sometimes of a general rather than a mathematical nature. Improving pupils' listening skills is one such area that is pertinent to improving pupils' learning in mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the clarity in the lesson planning of what each pupil should learn and involving them more in assessing their learning
- developing further the range of opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics and to deepen their thinking skills, coupled with guidance for staff on how to realise the potential of such activities and track pupils' progress in these areas.

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

Jane Jones  
Her Majesty's Inspector