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Miss P Coulthard
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Coulthard

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 12 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 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 above average.

- According to the school's records, most children enter school with mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding above those expected for their age. By the end of the reception year, most pupils exceed the learning goals expected for their age, which indicates satisfactory achievement in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 their attainment is above average.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 2 and accelerates in Year 5/6 where teaching is particularly good.

- Standards by the end of Year 6 improved in 2008 and are significantly above average.
- The school's increasingly effective tracking of pupils' progress is helping to improve the achievement of more able pupils and those who require additional support.
- Pupils' understanding of shape is good. Their calculation skills are very secure but some pupils experience difficulty in using and applying their skills when trying to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and relish a challenge, particularly when using information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematical games to enhance their learning.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Lessons are calm and purposeful and pupils know what is expected of them. Constructive marking of their work and setting targets for improvement ensure that they understand the next steps in learning.
- Mental starter sessions encourage pupils to think quickly and calculate accurately. Effective use of practical apparatus helps them to visualise mathematical ideas.
- The use of assessment is improving and is helping teachers to plan activities that are increasingly well matched to pupils' different learning needs. However, assessment within the lesson is not always used as well as it could be in identifying when pupils are ready to move to the next level.
- Pupils' conceptual understanding is pinpointed and extended very effectively in one of the junior classes but this is not equally well established in all parts of the school.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- Pupils have good access to ICT which increases their understanding and enjoyment of mathematics.
- The curriculum is sensitively adapted to meet the needs of pupils who find learning difficult. Increasing attention is now being given to the needs of the gifted and talented pupils.
- Clear curriculum guidance ensures that pupils' calculation skills develop smoothly and consistently as they move through school but there is no guidance to develop their problem solving and using and applying skills in the same way.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Staff absences have hampered the process of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and what little time has been available has been focussed on improving the teaching of writing. Consequently, some aspects of mathematics have not been examined sufficiently, such as checking the work in pupils' books

and evaluating how effectively teachers develop pupils' conceptual understanding. This has made it harder to improve teaching and learning.

- However, assessments are now being analysed and pupils' progress tracked to identify where additional teaching is needed. Classroom assistants are deployed well to support pupils whose achievement is faltering.

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 meaningful targets to help them improve. Training sessions have led to improvements in these areas.
- There is good expertise in the teaching of mathematics in the school, particularly in identifying pupils' misconceptions and using them to inform teaching. However, expertise is not shared sufficiently to benefit all teachers and all pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' capacity to use and apply their knowledge and skills to raise achievement further
- improving teachers' subject knowledge to enable them to anticipate misconceptions and use them to enhance pupils' understanding
- checking pupils' work in their books and evaluating how well teachers' promote pupils' mathematical understanding
- sharing the good practice that already exists to benefit pupils and teachers in every part of the 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

Colin Smith
Additional Inspector