

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr S Cox
Headteacher
St Mary's CE Primary School
Elliott's Hill
Brixton
Plymouth
Devon
PL8 2AG

Dear Mr Cox

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 14 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 three lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good and standards are above average.

- Children enter the school with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. Over the last few years standards at the end of Year 2 have risen with results in 2008 being above the national average for the first time.
- The small numbers of pupils in each year make comparisons difficult. However, Year 6 pupils reached above average standards in the 2008 national tests, having previously attained below average standards at age seven. This shows good progress.
- The school analyses end-of-key-stage and optional tests to identify any areas needing additional support. Records show which pupils make good progress and those who are not progressing as well as expected. Although this analysis is used

to give pupils a nominal expected level at the end of the year, these targets are not shared with pupils.

- In the mixed-age classes, careful grouping ensures pupils are appropriately challenged. They behave well in lessons and say they enjoy mathematics because their work is interesting.
- The very few pupils with learning difficulties make similar good progress to their peers. The school was chosen by some parents because of its rightly deserved high reputation for working with pupils who have physical disabilities.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- All classes are mixed aged. Lessons are well planned and matched to pupils' needs. They start with an appropriate oral activity. This is often used to check pupils' prior knowledge of the work to be covered or to identify any areas where pupils have a misconception. Questioning by teachers is effective in identifying any problems so they can be remediated later.
- Pupils are expected to give reasons for their answers and this helps them understand their work. Lessons conclude with pupils reflecting upon what they have learned, often in relation to the learning objectives.
- Good use is made of electronic whiteboards to engage and enthuse pupils. Teachers assess pupils' work well by moving around the class to identify errors. However, the usefulness of teachers' marking is inconsistent. Some marking supports pupils in improving their work. Other pupils mark their own work and they are not shown what their errors, if any, were or how to improve.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has an effective scheme of work which is matched into mixed-age classes. The revised primary framework has not yet been used to plan lessons but examples of teaching activities have been introduced. These often include using and applying mathematics but not in a structured way. This is an area the school has identified for improvement.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used in lessons and matched to the work covered. The school is building upon its range of opportunities for pupils to use ICT within topics.
- Children in the reception group receive a good mixture of directed and child-initiated activities in line with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. They are well supported by teaching assistants.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Your leadership has meant that standards and provision in mathematics have been constantly improving. The subject leader is now starting to develop work within mathematics. There is a suitable improvement plan which identifies areas for development.

- You have a good overview of the strengths of individual teachers and the subject leader has plans to formally monitor the work within the subject. The close cooperation of staff ensures they provide good informal support for each other. As yet, there are no formal procedures for the subject leader to monitor systematically the work in mathematics across the school.

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

- The school has used the introduction of electronic whiteboards to focus staff on increasing pupils' engagement in lessons. This has also stimulated greater challenge.
- The subject leader has supported colleagues by sharing ideas and demonstrating effective ways of teaching topics within mathematics.
- The subject leader and other staff have availed themselves of the opportunities to attend well received training by the local authority's National Strategy consultants.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- sharing targets with pupils to increase the challenge in lessons and in the longer term/over time
- systematically identifying opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in a variety of situations
- developing the role of the subject leader, particularly in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning/provision in mathematics.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector