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Mrs K Harrington
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harrington

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 13 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good and standards are average.

- Pupils make good progress overall, taking them from below average when they enter the Foundation Stage to average at the end of Key Stage 2. They make strongest progress in Years 5 and 6, and an above average proportion reaches the highest level by the end of Key Stage 2. This is a good achievement.
- In 2008, standards rose slightly at Key Stage 1 to close to average. All pupils attained the nationally expected Level 2. However, continuing the pattern of the last few years, fewer than average reached the highest level, Level 3.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics. They say that it is fun. They participate keenly in activities and are developing well their skills of discussion and explanation.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- The good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in lessons. Teachers know pupils well and match work closely to their needs. They motivate pupils effectively and raise their self-esteem so that all participate and are happy to volunteer ideas. Pupils enjoy using a range of learning styles. Good questioning encourages them to think and useful feedback on their work helps them to improve. Teaching assistants are well briefed and provide good support that ensures pupils have access to the activities. Behaviour is managed particularly well.
- Most teaching is good. In some lessons, pupils make satisfactory progress because they are not all challenged, particularly the higher attainers. The teachers do not check carefully enough what pupils know or how they are doing, and some pupils spend too long listening to introductions or reports of different work done by other pupils rather than being actively engaged in learning.
- Pupils know some of their targets, which have been linked well to lessons to help them improve. However, there is room for broader use of targets to give pupils a clearer idea of the next steps across the whole of the subject and involve them more in assessing their own progress.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The scheme of work uses the renewed Primary Framework well to ensure appropriate coverage of work in mixed-age classes. Suitable assessment points are built in for checking pupils' progress and adjusting activities accordingly. Plans for lessons include well-targeted work for each group of pupils and are annotated effectively in the light of pupils' previous responses to adapt work to their individual needs. This also informs well the support provided by teaching assistants.
- Higher attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 are challenged through separate teaching that includes aptly chosen problems. This contributes markedly to their good progress.
- Some topics are introduced in ways that help pupils understand the concepts well, but this is not a consistent approach. In the Foundation Stage, equipment and observation are used well to develop children's skills and understanding, but there are few visible prompts to extend them further.
- Pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics is enhanced through activities and games, and there is some hands-on use of information and communication technology in mathematics. However, planning and monitoring do not ensure that all pupils are entitled to the full breadth of experience and development of skills in these areas.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- The school's leaders have a clear focus on raising standards and progress. Evaluation is perceptive and suitably critical to pinpoint where improvement is

needed. It draws on evidence from an appropriate range of sources, although it does not systematically include pupils' views. Development planning is well focused and detailed, and has led to improvement.

- Substantial improvements in assessment and tracking have identified more precisely where pupils may be underachieving and have contributed to more focused intervention. There is room for staff to make more regular assessment of attainment and progress across the whole of the mathematics curriculum and for greater parental involvement through use of their children's targets.
- Evaluation of lessons is accurate. It identifies the key strengths and weaknesses, and has had an impact on improving teaching quality. Monitoring of pupils' work and the impact of initiatives is less frequent.

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

- The input from the local authority to support the introduction of the renewed Primary Framework and the staff training for it have helped to develop the teaching quality of the co-ordinator and other teachers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards, particularly at the highest level at Key Stage 1
- increasing the challenge and focus on understanding in lessons
- broadening assessment to involve staff, pupils and parents more frequently in checking how well pupils are meeting targets across the whole subject.

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

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector