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Mrs S Sesnan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sesnan

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 26 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, observation of two lessons and before school mathematics and Eco committee activities.

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.

- According to the school's assessment records, many children enter the school with knowledge and skills in mathematics that are below those expected for their age. By the end of the reception year, their attainment has reached the levels expected for their age. This indicates good progress in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is outstanding. Standards are rising steeply and standards by the end of Year 2 are exceptionally high
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' achievement is good and standards are rising as pupils are entering Year 3 with progressively higher attainment. By the end of Year 6 standards are currently well above average.

- Pupils' achievement in number, shape and space and handling data is particularly good because of the widespread use of information and communication technology (ICT) and strong links with other subjects such as science. Their capacity to use and apply their skills is good and improving rapidly as opportunities to refine these skills have vastly increased.
- High quality additional activities, such as before-school mathematics sessions, homework assignments and support groups, make a vital contribution to pupils' high achievement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning mathematics are exemplary. They develop impressive organisational skills and thoroughly enjoy the many mathematical challenges provided.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Teachers make very good use of assessment to measure pupils' progress and provide activities that are precisely matched to pupils' different learning needs.
- Excellent use is made of ICT to develop pupils' capacity to explore numbers and shapes, investigate patterns and solve real-life problems.
- Lessons are briskly paced and very challenging, particularly for the most able pupils. Teaching assistants work alongside pupils who require learning support very effectively. This ensures that all pupils learn successfully.
- Pupils have individual targets to aim for which provide a clear pathway to the next level. The marking of pupils' work in Key Stage 1 is highly effective but pointers for improvement are sometimes omitted in Key Stage 2, which makes it harder for those pupils to know how to improve.
- Teachers use mathematical apparatus, visual aids and astute questioning very effectively to develop pupils' understanding of complex ideas, such as predicting patterns involving positive and negative numbers. In the best lessons, pupils are given mini whiteboards on which to write answers. This helps the teacher to gauge their understanding. However, there are some occasions when the teacher relies too much on a show of hands and moves on without being absolutely sure that all pupils have grasped the ideas.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is very carefully planned and monitored to ensure that all areas of mathematics are taught in clear sequence, including the skills of using and applying mathematics.
- Every pupil has regular access to high quality ICT linked mathematical experiences. The vast majority arrive early to participate in the before-school mathematical investigation and games sessions. Mathematics is used and developed very effectively in the learning of other subjects involving real-life assignments, such as improving the school grounds. These key ingredients make mathematics meaningful and highly enjoyable.
- The school is very successful in meeting pupils' diverse and individual needs. Pupils with learning and language needs benefit from small group tuition, whilst able, gifted and talented pupils attend mathematics clubs and become involved in organising their own events, such as running the tuck shop.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- Your drive, energy and high expectations underpin your outstanding contribution to school improvement in mathematics.
- Senior staff and the subject leader ensure that developments in mathematics are rigorously monitored and evaluated. Lessons, teachers' plans, pupils' work and assessments of their progress are studied in detail. This leads to very accurate self evaluation and prompt identification of where action and intervention is required.
- Teachers and support staff benefit from having their performance carefully monitored and nurtured. Training for the whole staff and for individual teachers, for example in using ICT in mathematics, makes an important contribution to their confidence in teaching and to pupils' high achievement.

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

- A number of teachers in the school are well qualified and have good subject knowledge in mathematics. Collective planning of lessons and the wider curriculum is proving effective in sharing expertise and spreading good practice.
- When lessons are observed or pupils' work is examined, senior staff are able to evaluate the extent to which teaching has enhanced pupils' understanding. Outcomes are discussed, which helps to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of conceptual understanding.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that when pupils' work is marked, pointers for improvement are always included
- ensure that all teachers make effective use of assessment within the lesson to enable them to gauge pupils' understanding. This will help them to know when it is safe to accelerate pupils' learning or provide further reinforcement.

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