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Mr J Davie
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Dear Mr Davie

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 24 February 2009 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 two lessons and three parts of 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.

- Many children enter school with knowledge and skills above those expected for their age. Moderated assessments of their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage indicate that their mathematical development is satisfactory overall though good in aspects of number. Children's attainment is above that expected for their age when they join Year 1.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 1. Progress is now accelerating in Year 1. Standards in Year 2 currently are above average, as they had been prior to a dip in attainment in 2008.

- Standards had fallen in Key Stage 2 from well above average in 2005 to average in 2008. Some pupils had not achieved their potential. Improved teaching and extra mathematics classes, this year, have raised achievement to satisfactory levels. Standards in Year 6 currently are above average.
- Pupils' calculation skills and their knowledge of shape, space and measures are stronger than their capacity to handle data and use and apply their knowledge and skills to help them to investigate and solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils who find learning difficult benefit from effective support and make good progress. The achievement of able, gifted and talented pupils is improving as greater demands are placed upon them.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning mathematics. They listen attentively and work hard in lessons. There is a real buzz of excitement in Years 1 and 6 where pupils have become absorbed in investigating mathematics and are increasingly involved in assessing their own learning.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teaching and learning are improving across the school because teachers are using assessment more purposefully to plan activities that are better matched to pupils' different learning needs.
- Teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards to help pupils to understand complex ideas such as angular measure. Classroom computers are used to good effect in some lessons but are underused in others.
- Colourful wall displays of mathematical facts and vocabulary encourage pupils to be more self sufficient in lessons. This is helping them to learn independently.
- Teachers set targets for pupils to aim for and check their learning at regular intervals during the lesson. However, marking does not always provide pupils with sufficient information to help them to improve.
- Teaching is particularly good in Years 1 and 6. In these classes, teachers use assessment very effectively during the lesson to identify and develop pupils' conceptual understanding. In other lessons, teachers ensure that pupils complete the tasks but misconceptions sometimes go undetected.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum has been sensitively adapted to provide additional support for small groups of pupils. This is helping to fill the gaps in pupils' learning.
- Able, gifted and talented pupils are benefiting from the additional challenge in lessons and study sessions arranged with secondary schools.
- Over-reliance on a published mathematics scheme has ceased. Teachers now plan their lessons from national frameworks, taking account of the assessments made of pupils' learning.
- The school has worked hard to ensure that calculation skills are taught in a smooth progression as pupils move from class to class and that opportunities for increased data handling are built into the curriculum. Skills in using and applying mathematics and problem solving are developed well in a minority of classes but insufficiently in others.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- In the short time since your appointment, you have established a strong and effective leadership team with the deputy headteacher and senior teacher. Your determination to raise achievement in mathematics is very evident in the way you have involved teachers in interpreting and using assessment data to improve pupils' progress.
- To begin the process of school improvement, a swift and accurate analysis was made of the work of the school and weaknesses in teaching and learning have been clearly identified and are being tackled diligently.
- Tightly focussed action plans for improvement have been provided by the subject leader and shared with staff. Their implementation is being rigorously monitored. This is leading to more effective teaching and helping to squeeze out any underachievement.
- Meticulous tracking and intervening promptly to halt any faltering progress is proving effective in raising achievement.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are receiving valuable school-based training and additional support to ensure a whole-school focus on raising standards.

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

- Although some teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics requires strengthening, two leaders, who are also class teachers, have particularly good expertise and are able and ready to lead by example.
- Sharing the information gathered from observing lessons, analysing assessments and scrutinising pupils' work are helping teachers to understand their teaching strengths and identify areas for improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' capacity to use and apply their knowledge and skills to help them investigate and solve mathematical problems
- ensuring that marking of pupils' work communicates clear pointers for improvement
- increasing teachers' subject knowledge to enable them to develop pupils' conceptual understanding effectively in every lesson.

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