

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs L Wells  
Headteacher  
Edwards Hall Primary School  
Macmurdo Road  
Leigh-on-Sea  
Essex  
SS9 5AQ

Dear Mrs Wells

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 4 and 5 March 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 teachers and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of five lessons.

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

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good. Standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Standards are close to average at the end of Key Stage 1 but above average by the end of Key Stage 2. The school's focus on learning through experience and practical activity prepares pupils well to make good progress in Key Stage 2. High attaining pupils make satisfactory progress.
- The school's approach to teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in using and applying mathematics. Pupils display good levels of understanding because teachers make conceptual development a priority. For example, in work on fractions, pupils understood the conceptual meaning of the term

'denominator' as the 'number of equal parts' rather than the merely knowing that it was the 'number on the bottom'.

- Pupils' progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved considerably in the last two years and is now good.
- Pupils are polite, friendly, well behaved and, importantly, they enjoy mathematics and engage enthusiastically in learning.

### Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Teachers show good knowledge of mathematics and its pedagogy and select resources thoughtfully. They have efficient and well understood classroom routines and procedures.
- While end-of key-stage test results are considered important, teachers' first consideration is to provide rich learning experiences. Lessons are planned thoroughly and allow flexibility about the next steps in learning, based on the good assessment.
- Teachers move purposefully about the class as pupils are working. They identify and engage effectively with pupils who need their attention, use probing questions to find out what pupils know and understand.
- Pupils learn well because of the mixture of direct teaching, paired discussion, practical work and problem solving. Their progress is tracked carefully by their class teachers, but this information is not held in a form that readily allows a management overview.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Schemes of work are based on the revised framework produced by the Primary National Strategy. Teachers annotate their lesson plans and adapt them to ensure pupils learn well.
- Work is modified to meet a range of pupils' needs. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective, but the schemes of work are not clear enough about what is expected of the most able pupils.
- The school's preferred styles of teaching and learning naturally incorporate opportunities for all pupils to use and apply mathematics. This leads to good understanding, which is reflected in the increasing rate of progress as pupils move up the school.
- A valuable course is run for parents to help them support their children's learning of mathematics.

### Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Your leadership, and that of the deputy headteacher and mathematics co-ordinator, are evident in the school's commitment to ensuring that pupils develop a good understanding of mathematics. In lesson observations, the focus is now more on pupils' learning and less on peripheral aspects of the lessons.

- The mathematics co-ordinator regularly scrutinises pupils' books and checks teachers' planning and marking. This monitoring is well documented and teachers get useful feedback on their planning. As a result, planning and marking are consistently good.
- The school's evaluation of its mathematics provision includes a summary of attainment data, but not always an appropriate response. Occasionally a disappointing outcome is acknowledged, but no deeper analysis is offered.

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

- Teachers show a professional interest in improving their effectiveness. The greatest impact has come from: the school's adoption of the Primary National Strategy's revised framework; careful monitoring; attendance at specific training courses; and teachers' involvement in pilot schemes.
- In addition, the school has put a considerable amount of effort into clarifying and documenting its preferred approach to written calculations. The discussion that this generated among teachers provided good professional development.
- The school has promoted the idea of pairing teachers for 'learning conversations', which allow them to learn from each other. However, this is not linked closely enough to other processes such as lesson observation and book monitoring.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- Raising the achievement of the most able pupils by specifying what additional skills they are expected to master, as well as challenging them in their thinking.
- Improving the use of data as a management tool, by recording pupils' progress in a way that permits a good overview and by engaging in deeper analysis of existing attainment data and information from surveys of pupils and parents.
- Strengthening the impact of teachers 'learning conversations', for example by generating more topics for discussion from lesson observations and book monitoring exercises, and by involving more teachers as observers and scrutinisers.

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

Stephen Abbott  
Her Majesty's Inspector