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Mr M Ackers
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ackers

Ofsted survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 September 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 approach 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 six lessons or parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding.

- Children enter the school with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been consistently above average.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are well above average. This demonstrates very good progress, but the school is not complacent and is working hard to ensure pupils make greater progress, to be as successful as English and science. Observation of pupils in lessons confirms that they are highly

engaged and make excellent progress, although at times they have difficulty with mental calculation because they do not always have a fluency with number.

- Targets are used very well to identify what pupils need to do to achieve. Marking often refers to these, as well as setting specific individual targets on how pupils may improve.
- Pupils behave excellently in lessons and say they enjoy mathematics because their work is very interesting. They particularly enjoy the way in which work is relevant to the main theme they are covering in lessons at that time.
- The very few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is outstanding.

- Classes are organised in threes and cover two year groups. Teachers work collaboratively to ensure lessons are planned very well and matched to pupils' needs.
- Mathematics is often delivered via the main theme being covered by the class. There is a strong emphasis on problem solving. For example, pupils were observed investigating how to make the largest value combining the Roman numerals 'M D C L X V I', using each as many times as they needed. Others were learning about weights and measures related to rationing during the war.
- Lessons start with an appropriate oral activity, usually with teachers and pupils working effectively with the interactive whiteboards. This part of the lesson is often used to check pupils' prior knowledge of the work to be covered or to identify any areas where pupils have a misconception. Teachers' questioning is very good in identifying pupils' difficulties, enabling them to be resolved 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.
- Teachers assess pupils' work very well by moving around the class to identify errors. Marking supports pupils in improving their work.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is outstanding.

- The highly innovative curriculum draws on the Primary Strategy Framework to provide an overview but staff map mathematics into the main theme which is being covered at the time. There is a very strong emphasis on developing problem-solving skills and an abundance of opportunities for pupils to discover mathematical relationships through

investigations. Teachers of the triad of classes in each part of the school plan together and identify which groups of pupils are to receive support from the effective teaching assistants. This flexibility ensures different groups of pupils receive support while opportunities for additional support are available for those most in need from across the groups.

- Information and communication technology is used well in lessons and opportunities are matched in planning documents to the work to be covered.
- Reception-aged children receive a good mixture of directed and child-initiated activities in line with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. They are supported well by teaching assistants whose observations of the children contribute to ongoing assessments.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of mathematics is outstanding.

- You have formulated a highly effective team of staff who all support each other very well to bring about improvements to the overall quality of work within mathematics.
- Close working within triads ensures leaders have a very effective overview of each other's work and are able to offer good support when necessary.
- The school has an appropriate plan to carry on improving the quality of work in mathematics, including updating the whole-school calculation policy.

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

- The very close relationship between making the curriculum more relevant and improving the quality of mathematics teaching has meant staff have worked closely together to plan well-focused lessons. This has included incorporating problem-solving activities into many mathematics lessons.
- The support provided by staff within the school to other schools has meant they have become more reflective practitioners, resulting in improvements to their own teaching.
- You have ensured that staff adopt those areas from the Primary National Strategy materials which are relevant to your pupils and adapt others to better suit your pupils' needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' mental calculations by ensuring they have a better fluency with number and are able to identify for themselves the most appropriate way to carry out a calculation.

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