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Mrs E J Florey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Florey

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 2 November 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 included: interviews with you, the subject leader and two groups of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of lessons in each of the four classes.

The overall effectiveness of the subject is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception class due to exceptionally well-planned activities that develop firm foundations for future learning.
- In Years 1 to 6, pupils acquire knowledge and skills at a good rate and develop a good understanding of mathematical concepts. In the recent past, pupils have made slower progress in Years 3 and 4 than in Years 5

and 6. The school has now eliminated the weaknesses in teaching that caused these inconsistencies.

- As a result, attainment is rising and is now broadly average. Nonetheless, there are variations due to the small cohorts and the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in some year groups. These pupils make good progress in line with their peers.
- Pupils are keen to do well, work at a good pace and enjoy mathematics lessons. They work together well and share their ideas willingly in discussions.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teaching is at least good in every class and there are elements of outstanding practice. The excellent teaching seen in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 successfully develops children's understanding through very effective questioning, reinforcement of mathematical vocabulary, and well-planned practical activities.
- In all classes, teachers and well-briefed teaching assistants skilfully identify pupils' misconceptions and help them to overcome these through clear explanations, discussion and questioning.
- The strong emphasis on visual and practical learning is particularly successful for the high proportion of pupils who start school with weak numeracy and literacy skills.
- Teachers' marking gives praise for good work and the best examples show pupils how to improve and indicate the next steps in learning. Pupils in Year 6 explained confidently how they assess their own learning in relation to the objective of the lesson. These good assessment practices are not yet implemented consistently throughout the school.
- Pupils receive good support if they are finding a particular aspect difficult to understand. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 choose to visit the 'doctor's surgery' if they need extra help with concepts they are struggling with and say this is very helpful.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The school has embraced the revised framework for mathematics with great enthusiasm and is constantly seeking ways to plan practical experiences that are enjoyable, interesting and relevant to the pupils.
- Innovative approaches to teaching mathematics through cookery, rearing hens and growing vegetables are embedded in the curriculum for every year group.

- There is a growing emphasis on open-ended investigations and problem-solving activities, often set in real-life contexts. The school has yet to fully integrate these activities into every block of work.
- Teachers have developed meaningful links between mathematics and other subjects, such as science, design and technology and geography. The use of information and communication technology is currently a focus for improvement.
- Good partnerships with a local secondary school help to enrich the learning of pupils who are mathematically gifted.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Your own drive and enthusiasm for improving learning in mathematics ensure that the subject has high priority throughout the school. This is evident in the stimulating learning environment and the very well-resourced classrooms.
- High aspirations for all pupils are reflected in the challenging targets that are set for them to achieve. Attainment is rising in response to improvements in teaching and the curriculum.
- Rigorous monitoring of each pupil's progress and termly reviews with teachers identify pupils who are vulnerable to underachievement and lead to early interventions, such as individual support and small group work.
- The assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress in using and applying mathematics is less well developed than other aspects.
- Lesson observations focus clearly on pupils' learning and understanding, but records do not always clearly identify the areas that could be developed to improve teaching from good to outstanding.

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

- This small school's greatest strength is the strong teamwork among its staff, which ensures that expertise is shared effectively, both informally and through regular staff meetings.
- Training needs are identified through performance management interviews and met through a variety of means, including peer observation and input from external specialists.
- The subject leader provides support and coaching for teachers and assists them with planning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the range and scope of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in a range of contexts across all areas of mathematics

- ensuring consistency in day-to-day assessment, including marking, self- and peer-assessment, and extending teachers' expertise in assessing pupils' ability to use and apply mathematical skills and knowledge.

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

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector