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Dear Mrs Wood

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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons and parts of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils enter school with average or slightly above average attainment and by the end of Year 6 their attainment is usually above average. Current Year 6 pupils are working at levels significantly above those expected nationally.
- Pupils learn effectively and make good progress overall, including those of higher ability. Some of the pupils with lower attainment and special educational needs and/or disabilities underachieved in the past, but

decisive action taken by the school has resulted in improved progress over the past 18 months.

- Pupils' knowledge, skills and mathematical understanding develop equally well. However, some pupils find difficulty in using and applying their knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and enjoy mathematics. Successful achievement builds their confidence, and encouragement to assess their own learning increases their motivation.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Lessons have good pace, time is used efficiently and pupils are actively involved in learning from the outset. These factors capture pupils' interest in learning.
- Teachers draw on their good subject knowledge to explain complex ideas, such as angular measure. They use interactive whiteboards effectively to make learning visual and constantly check pupils' understanding by asking them to hold up their answers on mini-whiteboards. These factors ensure that misconceptions are identified and remedied quickly.
- Assessment is used effectively to measure progress, to set challenging targets and to provide activities that are matched well to pupils' different learning needs. However, there are occasions when more able pupils are asked to complete easier tasks, unnecessarily, before progressing on to more demanding ones.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are made fully aware of what they are expected to learn and provide very useful checklists to help them to measure their own progress. Some of the marking of pupils' work is outstanding but there are also occasions when teachers do not indicate the next steps.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is organised and sequenced carefully to ensure that pupils develop calculation skills systematically and learn to use them to solve problems.
- The development and promotion of pupils' conceptual understanding is at the heart of all of the school's planning.
- The curriculum is adapted sensitively to cater for pupils' different learning needs. Intervention groups and additional support are proving increasingly effective in closing former gaps in attainment.
- Developing links between subjects to enable pupils to improve, extend and become more creative learners is at an early stage of development.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Despite absences of school leaders, other key members of staff are ambitious for the school's development and are maintaining the drive for improvement.
- The subject leader is effective in keeping the work of the school under constant review by observing lessons, analysing assessments and gathering the views of pupils and parents. This enables leaders to make an accurate self-evaluation and identify, correctly, the areas requiring improvement. Checking the work in pupils' books has proved very useful in standardising calculation methods but some minor inconsistencies in teaching have been missed.
- The monitoring and setting of individual and whole-school targets is proving a powerful tool in raising 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 have good mathematical expertise. They lead by example and act as mentors for less experienced and temporary members of staff. Joint planning of lessons, within each year group, ensures that expertise is shared.
- The school has well-established systems of performance management, based upon classroom practice and pupils' progress. These factors ensure that training needs are clearly identified and met, which has a positive impact upon teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics to enable them to investigate and solve problems efficiently and confidently
- strengthening the checking of work in pupils' books, to ensure that inconsistencies in teaching, particularly in marking pupils' work and giving more able pupils access to demanding tasks from the outset, are identified and eliminated.

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