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Mrs J Mackle
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mackle

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 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, your staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children make a good start to their development of mathematical knowledge and skills in Reception so that all are working within or above the expected levels by the end of the year.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen to above average in the last few years. By the end of Key Stage 2, they are consistently above average, sometimes by quite a margin. Around half of the pupils reached

Level 5, which is above the standard expected of 11-year-olds, Level 4, which almost all attain.

- Pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress throughout their time in the school. This includes those children who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, all of whom are supported well in striving to reach their potential. In addition, many more pupils than is typical join the school at times other than at age 4, and especially during the Key Stage 2 years. They settle in very quickly and also make good progress.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners. Behaviour is very good and mature for pupils' ages. Pupils are attentive and concentrate hard on their work. They particularly enjoy working in groups, using computers, and solving challenging puzzles.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teaching is good in all four classes. The close-knit, reflective team of staff provides good mutual support and sharing of ideas and experience.
- Very good relationships underpin the classroom ethos: high expectations are evident in pupils' participation and the challenges presented through the range of activities that meet pupils' needs and abilities. Teaching assistants are skilful and work in seamless partnership with the teachers, for instance, in supporting groups of pupils and in recording responses of particular pupils during whole-class teaching. No time is wasted.
- Teachers have good generic teaching skills. Questioning, especially during starter activities, is probing and skilfully varied to ensure pupils of different ages and abilities are challenged to think. There is scope to improve teachers', and hence pupils', use of mathematical language so that pupils are better able to express their understanding and reasoning.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to solve problems but less often focus on developing their investigative skills. Practical resources are not always exploited to aid the development of pupils' conceptual understanding.
- Teachers mark pupils' work constructively and provide targets to indicate the next step. Some pupils are more familiar with their curricular targets than others. Useful 'I can' sheets are aiding the development of self-assessment by pupils.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Within each of the four mixed-age classes, pupils are grouped appropriately, according to their current levels of attainment. Teachers plan together, using the Primary National Strategy Framework and a wide range of resources. Sometimes, though, planning lacks precision in the

intended mathematical gains in learning. While pupils have opportunities to solve problems, their investigative skills are less well developed, particularly their ability to reason, generalise and justify.

- Good use is made of the outdoor environment, particularly in the infant classes.
- Pupils have many opportunities to use information and communication technology to practise skills and as a tool within mathematics. For instance older pupils' use of spreadsheets to collate and graph statistical data. The school is currently developing a 'learning platform' for staff, pupils and their parents.
- Pupils' learning in mathematics lessons is supplemented by good opportunities to apply mathematics within cross-curricular themes. Their understanding of enterprise is enhanced by an exciting project about managing a company.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Under your experienced strategic leadership of mathematics, the school is ambitious for each pupil's achievement and well-being. Staff and pupils have a strong sense of purpose. The school is forward-looking, with staff keen to develop their practice further. The school's track record of good, and sometimes outstanding, achievement has been maintained in a context of increased mobility of pupils, some of whom have considerable individual needs, and the pleasures and trials of Grade 2* listed accommodation and three 'temporary' classrooms. Capacity for further improvement is good.
- Your analysis of data and monitoring of pupils' progress against their targets is excellent. This informs curricular planning, grouping of pupils, and well-tuned intervention for those pupils who need specific help.
- The school endeavours to involve parents and keep them informed about their child's progress and how they can support their learning in mathematics. It aims to strengthen this partnership further through the new learning platform.

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

- Close working partnerships ensure that expertise is shared and help teaching in mathematics to keep moving forward. Monitoring identifies general features of teaching well but few improvement points that are mathematics-specific, for instance, on approaches that develop pupils' conceptual understanding.
- Effective use is made of training opportunities within school and through a range of providers. For example, staff have benefited from mathematics courses for teachers in the early stages of their careers and for teaching

assistants, as well as on national initiatives such as 'assessing pupils' progress'.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative and reasoning skills in mathematics
- refining the precision with which teachers plan pupils' learning in mathematics, paying particular attention to promoting mathematical language and the development of conceptual understanding.

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

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector