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2 December 2009

Mrs A Bowyer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bowyer

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 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.

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 the subject is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- The school's records indicate that children enter Nursery with mathematical knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. They make particularly good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Reception, their attainment is at the levels expected in recognising numbers and shapes, though their calculation skills are still below those expected for their age.

- In recent years, pupils have made satisfactory progress and reached average standards in Key Stage 1. Progress has been disrupted by staff absences. Staffing is now settled and pupils' learning and progress are improving. The 2009 teacher assessments show that attainment was above average.
- In recent years, given pupils' attainment on entering Year 3, progress during Key Stage 2 has been verging on outstanding. There have been staff changes. As new teachers settle in, they are beginning to make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Overall, progress is good and standards, by the end of Year 6, are broadly average, with a slight improvement in 2009.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make particularly good progress. The school has identified that girls and more able pupils do not make as good progress as other groups. Though the difference is not significant, teachers are working hard to raise the performance of these pupils.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of most areas of mathematics. They are competent in calculating but some pupils find it difficult to use and apply their skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils are highly motivated. Their behaviour in lessons, attitudes and interest in learning are excellent. They love mathematical games and rise to any challenge.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Assessment is used very well to provide challenging activities for all pupils. The focus on the needs of more able pupils is improving their learning.
- Most teachers develop pupils' conceptual understanding successfully. Effective use of interactive whiteboards and mathematical apparatus helps pupils to understand properties of shape and relationships between numbers.
- Teachers have worked hard to improve pupils' mathematical vocabulary and quick recall of number facts to strengthen calculating and problem solving.
- Experienced teachers use assessment effectively within lessons to identify pupils' understanding and adjust their teaching accordingly. Leaders recognise that less-experienced teachers are not able to operate so flexibly and are, therefore, helping them to make better use of assessment for learning.
- A good ratio of adults to pupils in lessons ensures that pupils' learning is frequently checked and misconceptions are quickly remedied.
- Pupils are increasingly involved in assessing their own learning. They use a traffic-light system to communicate their level of understanding. However,

not all pupils are crystal clear about what they need to do to improve because the next steps are sometimes omitted when their work is marked.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory with good features.

- The revised framework and Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum are firmly embedded. The local authority's guidance augments the curriculum effectively.
- All pupils benefit from activities designed to promote their mathematical understanding. These are clearly outlined in the calculation policy. However, opportunities for using and applying mathematics and problem solving are still insufficient.
- The curriculum is inclusive and ensures that the learning needs and interests of different groups of pupils are catered for equally well. Very effective intervention takes place to ensure that pupils are on track to make good progress.
- The school has planned links between mathematics and other subjects, such as information and communication technology (ICT), to reinforce pupils' understanding of data handling. However, leaders recognise that more needs to be done to extend pupils' 'real life' mathematical experiences.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Your leadership, through a turbulent period of staff absences and changes, has been outstanding in driving teaching and pupils' progress forward. This ensures the school has a good capacity for continued improvement
- Monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching is very effective. When lessons are observed, assessments are examined and pupils are interviewed to ensure that nothing is missed.
- The process of checking the work of the school is honest and sincere. Areas for improvement are carefully planned, forthrightly tackled and rigorously monitored.
- Governors benefit from involvement in checking pupils' work. However, because staff are not sufficiently involved, inconsistencies are sometimes missed.

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

- You are determined to ensure that teaching is as good as it possibly can be and communicate precisely what must be done to achieve it. Having staff work alongside colleagues and observe good teaching in other

classes and schools, is proving a highly effective strategy in your quest for excellence.

- Training needs are precisely identified and met as a result of observing lessons, analysing assessments and listening to pupils describing their learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' using and applying skills to help them solve mathematical problems by increasing opportunities in lessons and across the curriculum
- guiding less-experienced teachers to operate more flexibly in adapting their teaching in response to pupils' emerging understanding
- involving staff, as well as governors, in checking the work in pupils' books to ensure that inconsistencies are identified and remedied.

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