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Mrs C Harvey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harvey

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 February 2010 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 two part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children's mathematical attainment on entering school ranges from being typical for their age to above that expected, which has been the picture more recently. Children make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Reception, almost all children achieve the mathematical learning goals expected for their age and many exceed them.
- Pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2. Although attainment at the end of both key stages has been broadly

average in the past, standards are showing signs of improvement. Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are currently working at above average levels.

- Boys have performed better than girls over recent years. Less able pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have made comparatively better progress than more able pupils. However, the emphasis on raising the challenge is currently helping all of the more able pupils to fulfil their potential.
- In the past, pupils' calculation skills have been secure but they have faced difficulties in using and applying them. However, pupils are demonstrating greater competency in these areas as opportunities for problem-solving have been increased. Pupils achieve well in data-handling because of the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Most pupils, especially boys, enjoy mathematics. They work particularly well in pairs, discussing ideas and making decisions. By Year 5 and 6, the vast majority of pupils work with confidence, perseverance and enthusiasm.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers use interactive whiteboards imaginatively, for example, to illustrate and explain mathematical ideas such as reflective symmetry.
- Good quality teaching support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to learn successfully and reach their targets.
- Teachers help pupils to learn independently, for example by providing wall displays of methods of calculation and correct vocabulary for pupils to refer to.
- Assessment is used effectively to provide activities that are usually matched well to pupils' different learning needs. However, there are occasions when the learning of more able pupils is restricted, for example by having to complete easier examples before moving on to more demanding tasks.
- In the most successful lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding and progress at regular intervals. This helps them to know whether to pause or move the lesson on more quickly. In others, pupils' understanding is not always checked and extended sufficiently when the whole class is taught together.
- Although errors in pupils' work are identified and corrected, pointers for improvement are not always given when pupils' work is marked, and insufficient use is made of individual targets. This makes it harder for pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The renewed mathematical framework has been implemented successfully and, as a result, calculation skills are learned consistently in each class.
- Increased opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills are evident in the enterprising development of outdoor learning and good links with other subjects, such as science and ICT, which pupils enjoy.
- The curriculum is adapted effectively to cater for the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is now turning its attention to the needs of the gifted and able pupils but has not yet tackled the differences in performance between boys and girls.
- Effective intervention programmes enable pupils, whose progress has faltered, to catch up.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of mathematics is satisfactory with good features.

- The subject leader works hard to improve mathematics, leading by example through high quality teaching, promoting the use of ICT in mathematics and improving pupils' investigation skills.
- Thorough analysis of assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress towards increasingly challenging targets are instrumental in improving achievement.
- Observing lessons has helped to improve aspects of teaching such as pace, matching work to pupils' needs, and the use of time. Less attention is given to evaluating how well teachers improve pupils' conceptual understanding.
- Checking the work in pupils' books has led to improvements in calculation skills, presentation and increased opportunities for using and applying mathematics. However, inconsistencies in marking and instances of limited challenge for more able pupils have not been tackled.

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

- The subject leader has very good subject knowledge, increases pupils' conceptual understanding particularly well and demonstrates how mathematics can be reinforced effectively through links with other subjects. However, other pressing priorities within the school have made it more difficult for expertise to be shared.
- Staff training is encouraging teachers to place greater emphasis on problem-solving and helping them to use assessment more precisely to provide tasks that are challenging and matched closely to pupils' different learning needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the achievement of girls
- making greater use of individual targets and marking to help pupils to know what they need to do to improve
- sharing the subject leader's expertise to increase teachers' confidence and skills in developing pupils' conceptual understanding.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics in the school.

As explained previously, 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