

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs J Lack  
Headteacher  
Harlyn Primary School  
Tolcarne Drive  
Pinner  
HA5 2DR

Dear Mrs Lack

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 23 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 you, the subject leader and groups of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of parts of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils enjoy mathematics lessons and engage in all activities with enthusiasm. They concentrate well on tasks and work productively with others in paired and group activities. Year 3 pupils greatly enjoyed being waiters and customers in the class 'pizza restaurant' and cooperated well to work out the total cost of a meal.
- Pupils' attainment has risen in response to improved teaching and is now above average. The school has identified that pupils' knowledge and understanding of measures are less well developed than other areas of

mathematics. There is currently a whole-school focus on improving this aspect, which lay at the heart of the recent and very successful 'Maths Week'.

- Learning and progress are good across the school. Children get off to a flying start in Nursery and Reception and develop a good knowledge of number, calculations, shape and measures. As they progress through the school, they build on this good foundation and become increasingly competent at using mathematical skills in a variety of real-life situations.
- The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good support they receive. Pupils whose first language is not English make good progress because mathematical language is given high priority and they quickly acquire appropriate vocabulary to explain their ideas.

### Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Improvements in teaching have focused on making learning more interesting and engaging by providing pupils with a wide variety of practical activities set in real-life contexts. Year 5 pupils were highly motivated when tackling problems that involved percentages in a toy shop scenario.
- High-quality questioning by teachers and classroom assistants promotes good learning through challenging pupils to think for themselves and explain their reasoning.
- Rigorous assessments at the start of each unit of work show teachers where pupils are starting from. This enables them to identify those pupils who need to consolidate previous learning before moving on and those who are capable of greater challenge. Consequently, lessons are planned well to meet the needs of different groups within each class.
- Pupils are increasingly involved in moving their own learning forward by referring to the class targets and deciding at which level they feel confident to challenge themselves. In the best lessons, teachers reinforce these expected outcomes at various points to keep pupils focused on learning.
- The quality of marking is variable. In most cases, teachers assess how well pupils have done in relation to the objective for the lesson. Marking that develops learning and shows pupils the next steps is not consistent. Occasionally, teachers pose questions to pupils or suggest ways to improve, but there is little evidence to show that pupils are then given time to respond.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Previously, monitoring showed that there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in real-

life contexts. The curriculum now promotes these aspects of mathematics well and the school is buzzing with pupils engaged in a range of exciting activities, many of them linked to other aspects of the curriculum.

Teachers are now exploring further ways to incorporate these activities into each block of work and to extend opportunities for pupils to acquire and practise mathematical skills in other subjects.

- Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is planned rigorously by specialist teachers and well-trained teaching assistants. Pupils who are learning to speak English receive additional support in advance of a new unit of work that equips them with the mathematical language necessary to understand the concepts. Weekly classes for the most able pupils, led by a specialist teaching assistant, challenge them with open-ended investigations and provide valuable opportunities to discuss thinking and reasoning in a small group.
- The recent 'Maths Week' greatly enhanced pupils' learning about measures and involved parents successfully in supporting their children's learning at home.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- The subject leader's considerable expertise and passion for mathematics are driving improvement at a good pace. Her infectious enthusiasm is helping to build colleagues' confidence in adopting increasingly creative approaches to teaching. In only her second year as mathematics coordinator, she has yet to spread her influence fully throughout the school by working alongside staff to model best practice.
- Leaders' thorough monitoring and evaluation of lessons, pupils' work and teachers' planning clearly identified the most important areas for improvement. These are now being tackled through carefully planned initiatives and strategies. For example, the subject leader has provided teachers with valuable guidance and resources to help them to devise opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills.
- Rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress from term to term and regular meetings on pupils' progress with every teacher enable senior managers to target support where it is most needed. The subject leader carefully evaluates the impact of specific interventions, such as the use of a computer program for daily short practice sessions in Years 5 and 6 to consolidate learning.

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

- The subject leader is undertaking training to become a leading mathematics teacher. She provides high-quality support and training for all staff. This has resulted in an increase in teachers' subject knowledge, confidence and enjoyment of mathematics.

- During the past year, all teachers had performance management targets based on improving provision and outcomes in mathematics. Individual training needs are identified and specific training is arranged to boost teachers' knowledge and skills. In addition, all staff were trained in the use of assessment techniques and questioning to support learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing consistently good practice in marking so that it shows pupils the next steps in learning
- extending opportunities for the subject leader to share her expertise across the school.

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

Carole Skinner  
Additional Inspector