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Mrs C Jones
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jones

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 25 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 senior assistant head, the subject leader and groups of pupils from Year 4 and Year 6; 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 are enthusiastic learners who make good progress in lessons. They work hard, show interest and initiative and discuss their ideas productively with their 'talk partners'.
- Having identified that girls were not achieving as highly as boys, the school is successfully focusing on raising girls' confidence and aspirations. In lessons, girls contribute well and make similarly good progress to boys.
- Analysis of pupils' performance in tests revealed that many struggled when faced with mathematical problems expressed in words. This was

found to be linked closely to pupils' limited understanding of mathematical vocabulary, especially for the high proportion of pupils whose home language is not English. Pupils' problem-solving skills are rapidly improving as a result of the current whole-school focus on these aspects of learning.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Close collaboration between teachers at the planning stage ensures consistency between the four classes in each year group. It also allows for the regular exchange of ideas and sharing of expertise, which enhances learning for all pupils.
- Pupils say they enjoy learning because of the good variety of practical activities, many of which are set in a real-life context. For example, Year 5 pupils extended their understanding of data in graphs and tables by investigating how well Yeading hockey team performed in comparison with other schools.
- Eye-catching classroom displays support learning very well. Pupils often refer to the displays of key vocabulary and problem-solving strategies when working independently.
- In most lessons, work is matched appropriately to the needs of different groups within the class. Occasionally, the more-able pupils are given tasks that do not build rapidly enough on their existing knowledge and skills.
- Assessment strategies are very well developed. Pupils assess their own progress in relation to the lesson objectives and check their learning against success criteria which the teacher shares with them at the start of the lesson.
- Marking is rigorous and informative and pupils say it helps them to improve. Older pupils know their individual targets and can explain what they need to do to reach higher levels of attainment.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Since the introduction of the renewed mathematics framework, there has been a major focus on incorporating opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in every block of work. This continues to strengthen as teachers modify planning from one year to the next.
- There is a broad overview to show where mathematical concepts can be developed through other subjects. These cross-curricular links are still developing as the school moves towards a more integrated approach to planning.
- High quality additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are learning to speak English ensures they are well equipped with basic skills. The most gifted pupils have

regular opportunities to tackle investigations that challenge them to extend their thinking.

- A variety of additional activities enriches learning in mathematics. For example, Year 6 pupils are learning about budgeting and banking through the 'My Money' project, while all pupils really enjoy the wide range of exciting activities that takes place during 'Mathematics Week'.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Senior leaders' high expectations and aspirations are reflected in the challenging targets that are set for all groups of pupils. Their drive to raise attainment is shared by all staff and founded on rigorous self-evaluation.
- The subject leader plays a key role in evaluating the effectiveness of provision and works closely with senior leaders to ensure consistency when implementing new strategies and initiatives.
- Detailed analysis of pupils' progress and performance in mathematics tests clearly identifies where improvement is needed. Action is then taken to modify teaching strategies, as in the recent introduction of a systematic approach to problem-solving.
- A move towards a more integrated, cross-curricular model of subject management is giving rise to more creative approaches to planning the mathematics curriculum. The process of establishing meaningful and relevant connections between mathematics and other subjects is well underway but has yet to be fine-tuned.

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

- You and your staff have performance management targets that relate to mathematics. Most recently, these have related specifically to raising pupils' attainment in problem-solving.
- Staff attend a wide variety of courses, tailored to their particular needs. Training is provided by the subject leader and the local authority's mathematics adviser, who has also taught model lessons and coached individual staff.
- In its bid to improve pupils' learning, the school has taken steps to involve families more actively in their children's learning, for example by teaching them the methods used in school so they are better equipped to help their children.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the more-able pupils are always challenged sufficiently by their tasks in each part of the lesson
- fine-tuning the links between mathematics and other subjects so that pupils become increasingly aware of its importance in everyday life.

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

As I 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