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Mr R Orlandi
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Orlandi

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 2 March 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 improving the quality of teaching.

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 four part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children enter school with knowledge and skills that are typical of their age. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in developing skills of calculation. By the end of the Reception year, attainment is above average.
- Learning and progress are satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and standards are average by the end of Year 2. In Key Stage 2, learning and progress are good. Attainment has been well above average in recent years. The current Year 6 pupils are working at above-average levels.
- Different groups of pupils, such as boys, girls, higher and lower attaining pupils, make equally good progress. Over recent years, average attaining

pupils have made the best progress, largely because additional catch-up lessons have ensured that almost all pupils achieve the class targets.

- Pupils' mathematical understanding and their capacity to solve problems develop effectively alongside their knowledge and skills. Weaknesses in data-handling are now being remedied through cross-curricular topics.
- Most pupils enjoy mathematics. Behaviour is exemplary in lessons. Pupils listen attentively, show maturity in working in pairs and persevere to overcome a challenge.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teachers provide a good level of challenge, although there are occasions when more able pupils have to complete easier examples, unnecessarily, before progressing to the more demanding tasks.
- Pupils' understanding is enhanced through practical experiences and teachers' use of interactive whiteboards, which help pupils to visualise and grasp difficult mathematical ideas, such as inverse operations.
- Teachers' probing questioning encourages pupils to think deeply and misconceptions are often nipped in the bud during the excellent paired discussion sessions.
- Teachers sometimes rely on a show of hands to gauge pupils' understanding when the whole class is taught together. Techniques to check that all pupils understand, such as asking all pupils to hold up their answers written on mini-whiteboards, are not used sufficiently.
- The marking of pupils' work is particularly good in Key Stage 2, where teachers unravel any misunderstanding and provide pointers for improvement. Pupils are given targets to aim for and are beginning to assess their own understanding using traffic-light colours.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The school has implemented the renewed framework successfully to ensure that pupils build on previous learning, develop secure calculation skills and learn how to solve mathematical problems in real contexts.
- The impact of the curriculum is carefully evaluated to maximise pupils' conceptual understanding. For example, marking of pupils' work and analysing assessments often determine the next series of lessons.
- Within the Early Years Foundation Stage, mathematical experiences are imaginatively woven into all areas of learning, particularly indoors. Additional short, intensive teaching sessions, enable children to develop confidence and competence in reasoning and handling numbers.
- Pupils' mathematical development is enhanced through information and communication technology (ICT), such as personalised programmes that assess understanding and provide further activities at just the right level.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- As headteacher, your interest in the subject and support for staff development are key ingredients that underpin the school's success.
- Your deputy and the subject leader provide enlightening examples of how mathematics should be taught.
- Checking teachers' planning, pupils' work and assessments provide vital clues in identifying areas for improvement.
- Setting challenging targets, rigorously monitoring pupils' progress towards them and intervening to ensure that good progress is maintained are important factors in raising achievement and maintaining high standards.
- The school has embarked on a promising strategy of seeking and taking account of parents' and pupils' views to inform strategic planning.

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

- Senior teachers draw on their good expertise in mathematics to coach new members of staff.
- The school has a clear mathematics policy, which is helping to promote good and consistent teaching during a period of staff changes.
- The school has engaged in extensive staff training in mathematics over the previous two years. Teachers have benefited from courses designed to help them implement new forms of assessment, the changing mathematics curriculum and specific aspects of teaching, such as developing pupils' calculation and data-handling skills. The training provided is having a positive influence on the quality of teaching.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 1
- employing more effective techniques to help the teacher to check all pupils' understanding during the whole-class teaching part of the lesson.

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

Colin Smith
Additional Inspector