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Mrs M Morrissey  
Headteacher  
Our Lady Of Lourdes RC School  
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Dear Mrs Morrissey

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 9 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 how well the curriculum secures progression in mathematical understanding for every pupil.

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 parts of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Improvements in teaching and the curriculum have accelerated pupils' progress and raised attainment to above average levels. Pupils make good progress in each year group because learning is planned well to cover any gaps in their understanding before moving on to a new concept. This is reflected, for example, in pupils' good understanding of different methods of division and their confidence in using them.
- Year 6 pupils demonstrated excellent learning as they investigated patterns and relationships involving square numbers. They devised and

tested hypotheses and explained their reasoning convincingly. Pupils in Year 4 extended their understanding of three-dimensional shapes as they visualised and explored the relationships between a cube and its two-dimensional net. They very capably explained how they came to their conclusions.

- Pupils enjoy mathematics lessons, particularly those that involve practical work and investigations. They take pride in their work and tackle challenges with enthusiasm. Pupils collaborate productively when discussing ideas with a partner or working in a small group.
- Solving word problems is an area where some pupils are less confident. This is because their grasp of language sometimes hinders their understanding of the questions. There is currently a strong focus throughout the school on ensuring pupils learn to use correct mathematical vocabulary.

### Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Typically, lessons are stimulating and motivational, engaging pupils successfully in active learning. Teachers use a wide variety of interesting resources to help pupils understand new concepts.
- High-quality planning builds effectively on previous learning and provides appropriate tasks and activities for pupils at different levels of attainment. Teachers amend their planning from day to day to take account of gaps in pupils' knowledge and to accommodate those who need more time to assimilate a new concept.
- Rigorous assessment of pupils' progress from week to week helps to identify those who need additional help. Some receive additional support from teaching assistants in lessons while others are given individual tuition to reinforce learning of basic concepts. Fluid groupings in Year 6 are particularly effective in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are gifted mathematicians.
- There is much good practice in marking. For example, a Year 4 pupil was given this advice: 'The accuracy of your results will improve when you read the question twice to check you understand and check that your answers make sense'. The pupil's response thanked the teacher for the reminder and subsequent work showed that the advice had been put into practice. This constructive approach is being vigorously promoted but is not yet consistent throughout the school.

### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Mathematics enjoys a high profile throughout the school and is becoming well integrated into the school's creatively planned curriculum. The programmes of study meet the widely differing needs of all groups of

pupils while policies and guidance for teachers ensure consistency and progression in learning.

- Opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge are planned seamlessly into each block of work. Pupils investigate mathematical ideas, test hypotheses and draw conclusions. The school recently identified the interpretation of data as a relatively weaker aspect of the curriculum. This is a current focus for improvement throughout the school.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in real-life and imaginary situations. For example, Year 6 pupils set up a fair trade shop and learned how to manage a budget and calculate profit margins. They also thoroughly enjoyed investigating a 'poisoning' and used their mathematical skills and knowledge to eliminate 'suspects'.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- The subject leader provides an outstanding model of good practice in the classroom and has been supported well in developing the role over the last 18 months. She has a passion for mathematics, excellent subject knowledge and a clear vision for the future development of the subject.
- Mathematics has been a key priority in the school development plan for the last two years as a result of thorough self-evaluation which highlighted exactly where improvements were needed. The actions taken have been considered carefully, implemented with rigour and thoroughly evaluated. Their impact is now apparent in pupils' accelerating progress and their rising attainment. You and the subject leader recognise that some initiatives have yet to take full effect to ensure the rising trend continues. Nevertheless, the school's capacity to maintain this improvement is good.

Subject issue: how well the curriculum secures progression in mathematical understanding for every pupil

- The curriculum provides a clear framework for progression in each aspect of mathematics and teachers adapt this to meet the needs of the pupils in their class. Weekly planning provides a clear outline of intended learning, while daily planning is modified in the light of pupils' progress.
- Termly meetings between teachers and senior staff to review each pupil's progress identify gaps in learning and give rise to interventions to secure pupils' mathematical understanding. Additional challenges are added for high flyers while pupils who learn at a slower pace are supported well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding strategies to build pupils' confidence and extend their skills in solving word problems
- disseminating the good practice in marking seen in some classes so that it consistently points pupils to the next steps in learning.

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

As we 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