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Mrs N Clay
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Dear Mrs Clay

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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children enter the school with a range of skills and understanding that overall are typical for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy. By the end of the Reception Year, attainment is above average.
- Learning and progress are good in Key Stage 1. Standards have been above average for several years.
- Learning and progress are good overall in Key Stage 2 but are more rapid in Years 5 and 6. Attainment has improved since 2007 and has been

significantly above average for the past two years. Pupils in Year 6 are working at above average levels.

- Different groups of pupils, such as boys, girls, higher and average attaining pupils, make equally good progress. In the recent past, those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made the best progress, largely because of the regular review of the clear targets in their individual education plans and the good quality of the support they receive. This has ensured that all pupils have attained at least the level expected for their age at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' mathematical understanding and their ability to solve problems develop well alongside their knowledge and skills. An identified weakness in written methods for multiplication is being tackled through a clear progression of methods to be used through the school.
- Most pupils enjoy the practical approach in mathematics lessons and behaviour is exemplary. Pupils listen carefully, cooperate well in groups and have the confidence to try different methods to solve problems.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Most teachers plan work well to provide a good level of challenge for different groups of pupils.
- Teachers make good use of practical resources and tasks to enhance pupils' understanding. Reception children develop a good understanding of the properties of shapes as they look for different shapes indoors and outside.
- Teachers give clear explanations and demonstrations at the start of a lesson and check that pupils understand what they have to do. They intervene well in lessons to correct any misconceptions. Teachers pick up on pupils' self-evaluations, for example by using a thumbs-up or thumbs-down sign to denote their understanding, to provide extra support when needed.
- Support staff are skilled. They are deployed well and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- The principles of assessment for learning are used consistently well throughout the school, in lessons and in marking, so pupils have a clear idea of what they are doing well and how they can improve.
- The new strategy for Assessing Pupils' Progress is being developed in mathematics following its successful implementation in English.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is outstanding.

- The school has implemented the renewed framework successfully to ensure that all pupils build systematically on previous learning, develop good mathematical skills, and use them confidently to solve problems.

- There is a very good balance between practical activities that promote understanding and clear progression of written methods for calculations. An identified weakness in multiplication was tackled effectively. Pupils now progress through counting in twos, counting groups of objects, learning multiplication tables and using the grid method for long multiplication.
- The most able pupils are identified at an early age and often join an older class for mathematics which provides good challenge. Some elements of the Key Stage 3 curriculum are incorporated into the plans for Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well in class, in small groups or on an individual basis.
- A creative curriculum, linking subjects together where relevant, is being used effectively to enhance learning and increase pupils' enjoyment. For example, pupils in Year 1 learn about the passage of time as they plot Cinderella's day through the story.
- The curriculum for problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. It is based firmly on purposeful, practical activities that show a good understanding of how young children learn. Activities in all areas of learning are used effectively to develop children's understanding of shape as they look at shapes in the real world and make patterns, for instance when creating dinosaur pictures using different sponges.
- Highly effective transition arrangements between Reception and Year 1 capitalise on the success of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The teacher for last year's Reception class has become the Year 1 teacher. She continued the Early Years Foundation Stage methodology for at least the first term and used her prior knowledge of the children to plan very good challenge and support for different groups immediately.
- Pupils have regular access to mathematics programmes in the information and communication technology (ICT) suite. They enjoy the individual challenges posed by some programs which they can also access at home. The school has identified a need to integrate further the use of computers into mathematics lessons.

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, monitoring of lessons and support for staff development are key factors that underpin the school's success. You are supporting the new subject leader well through arranging training and giving advice as she extends her role to monitoring teaching and learning of mathematics. Her enthusiasm, commitment and expertise provide an excellent model of how mathematics should be taught.
- Checking teachers' planning, talking to staff and pupils, and evaluating pupils' learning and progress provide crucial evidence in identifying areas for improvement. Your high expectations, rigorous monitoring and timely intervention were important factors in raising standards from average in 2007.

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

- Teachers evaluate lessons carefully to ensure that the next lesson builds on previous learning. There is clear progression through the curriculum to develop pupils' understanding of concepts such as area, from counting squares, to using the formula for calculating the area of a triangle.
- Work is matched well to the level of understanding of different groups in each class. Teachers often use the objectives from older year groups to challenge more able pupils. There are clear programmes of individual support to help pupils who fall behind.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the rate of progress in lower Key Stage 2
- integrating the use of ICT to support learning in mathematics lessons.

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

Shirley Herring
Additional Inspector