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Mr C Lewis
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lewis

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 28 June 2010 to look at work 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 without their consent.

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.

- A steady upward trend means that attainment at the end of Year 6 is now slightly above the national average. This is the result of the strong focus on improving pupils' skills in mental mathematics and in calculation. Pupils talked about how they feel they have improved in terms of understanding a variety of methods to use when applying the four operations.
- Pupils make good progress across the school. All groups do well. Those with significant special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-targeted support from teaching assistants and programmes that have been modified to suit their needs.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and show good application in lessons. They work well in pairs and support each other's thinking. This was evident in a

lesson where they collaborated successfully to calculate a series of answers using a limited number of digits.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Lessons are well organised and teachers make good use of resources, particularly interactive whiteboards, to demonstrate key teaching points. In group activities, the provision of simple formats for making notes and responding to questions and the use of support materials, such as counters and 100 squares, mean that pupils can focus on the mathematical element of their learning without spending too much time on recording.
- Teachers often base lessons on their assessment of pupils' prior learning. They place a strong emphasis on linking work with real-life contexts so that pupils can see the purpose of the tasks that they undertake. Pupils are given targets, but systems for doing this are inconsistent. While instances of helpful and evaluative marking of pupils' work are evident, comments rarely refer to how well they are doing in relation to their targets.
- Teachers are proactive in checking pupils' understanding during lessons and are quick to identify confusions and misunderstandings. In the most effective lessons, this leads to a quick mini-plenary session to ensure that all pupils are on track. Occasionally, too much time is spent on dealing with pupils' questions on an individual basis and this tends to slow the pace of learning.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum places a strong emphasis on promoting numeracy skills and helpful guidance supports staff in teaching a variety of methods for calculation. Pupils have some opportunities to use their skills in solving problems but, as the school has recognised, these need to be increased and this is a priority for development over the next academic year.
- Pupils enjoy a variety of activities during 'maths week' and are enthusiastic about opportunities to visit a variety of workshops and apply their skills in playing mathematical games. Apart from these sorts of events, their use of information and communication technology (ICT) is limited and the potential to use it in investigative activities is not exploited.
- Planning is based on the numeracy framework but individual lesson plans are in different forms. The plans give a clear outline of the structure of the lesson and identify a variety of tasks to support the range of pupils' abilities. However, learning intentions are not always made clear and key vocabulary is not always identified and used during the lesson.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Detailed analysis of pupils' performance in national and non-statutory tests is used well to identify trends and pinpoint specific areas for improvement. Earlier this year, this led to a whole-school focus on improving pupils' understanding of fractions, which has enhanced their confidence and skills in applying their knowledge in this area.
- Regular monitoring of teaching ensures that individual teachers receive feedback and also informs whole-school evaluation of provision in mathematics. Evaluation of pupils' achievement and the identification of strengths and weaknesses in provision have led to the improvements in attainment seen in recent years.
- A range of intervention strategies has successfully boosted pupils' progress in Year 6. Specific programmes have also been used in other year groups to support lower attaining pupils, but the outcomes have been somewhat mixed. The senior leadership team is rightly exploring options for earlier intervention and has plans to implement a new approach across the school from September.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that a consistent system is used for setting targets and giving pupils feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
- extending opportunities for problem-solving and investigative activities, making use of ICT where appropriate
- standardising systems for planning, ensuring that learning objectives are clear and specific and that key vocabulary is identified and used during the lesson.

I hope that 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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Billington
Additional Inspector