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Mr R Gasser
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gasser

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 30 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Pupils make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, attainment is generally above average and in some years exceptionally high. They develop good skills in calculation and in shape, space and measure and understand how to use what they know to solve a variety of problems.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well but the school has identified that a few pupils, particularly boys, find it difficult to engage with learning or lack confidence in their abilities. A range of strategies has been implemented to tackle this, such as individual tuition and providing training for parents to help them to help their children.
- The vast majority of pupils show good application in lessons and are keen to succeed. Pupils identify a variety of aspects of the subject that they

enjoy, including weighing and measuring, calculator work and tackling 'real-life' practical problems.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Teachers make good use of resources, particularly interactive whiteboards, to demonstrate key teaching points. Lesson plans identify clear learning objectives and key vocabulary and, where teaching is most effective, these are the focus of all elements of the lesson.
- Planning takes account of the range of pupils' needs in each lesson. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from being taught in smaller groups and are supported well by teaching assistants. Those with significant complex difficulties are given simple practical activities and help with recording their ideas so that they can make progress in their mathematical understanding.
- Teachers often adjust their planning in the light of pupils' responses or understanding of the concepts being taught. They are quick to pick up where pupils are having difficulties with the work set and to re-visit ideas to enhance their understanding where appropriate.
- Targets are set for individual pupils, but the way that this is done varies across the school. Although pupils often get helpful verbal feedback, they are not always clear what they are working towards or when their target is achieved.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- There is good coverage of all aspects of the mathematics. Links are made across subjects so that, for example, mathematics is drawn from topic work or pupils' own experiences. The forthcoming sports day was used effectively as an opportunity for Year 5 pupils to estimate, measure and compare a variety of distances in throwing and jumping activities.
- Opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics, particularly in solving problems, are good. A wide range of activities in data-handling supports the development of skills in reasoning and interpreting information. However, provision is limited for pupils to engage in open-ended investigative activities which have the potential to allow more able mathematicians, in particular, to use their good skills.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used occasionally, particularly for mathematical games, but is not yet embedded as an integral part of provision. Pupils commented that they would like more opportunities to use computers.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- Leadership is at a transitional stage, with a new deputy head taking over the subject this year. The school recognises the need to tighten systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of provision, including more frequent observations of lessons.
- A useful analysis of pupils' performance in end-of-year tests has recently been undertaken. This has highlighted strengths and areas for improvement. This is a positive development, which has the potential to contribute to the systematic evaluation of mathematics.
- Training for teaching assistants and the provision of additional resources enable them to support individual pupils effectively. Plans are in hand to implement a more diagnostic approach to identify pupils' specific difficulties in mathematics and to review intervention programmes to ensure that these are meeting individual needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- establishing consistent systems for setting individual targets for pupils and ensuring that these targets are reviewed regularly so that pupils understand how well they are doing and are clear about the next step in their learning
- extending the use of ICT, particularly to enhance opportunities for more able mathematicians to use their good skills in open-ended investigative activities.

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