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Mrs A Wood  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Wood

Ofsted survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 September 2009, 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 the effectiveness of the school's approaches to improving the quality of teaching and learning 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons and three part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject, mathematics, is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Most children enter Nursery with poor mathematical knowledge and skills. By the end of the Reception Year, their attainment is still below that expected for their age, although they have made good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, given their starting points.
- Pupils' learning and progress are good in Key Stage 1. Attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 2.

- Pupils also learn well and make good progress through Key Stage 2. They are entering Year 3 with increasingly higher attainment than they did a few years ago. Standards by the end of Year 6 have been rising, apart from 2009 when results fell on account of high numbers of pupils moving into the school, many of whom had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' current work indicates attainment is broadly average in Year 6.
- Pupils who receive additional support with their learning make good progress towards their targets, although a minority of the more able pupils do not learn as well as they could, particularly when teachers rely too much upon commercial schemes of work.
- Pupils' calculation skills and their understanding of shape and data increase at a good rate but pupils find more difficulty in using and applying their knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils behave well, listen carefully, persevere, show pride in the presentation of their work and develop a spirit of 'I can do.' They enjoy learning because of the many varied and interesting activities provided.

#### Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Calm, well-paced and often exciting lessons, many involving mathematical games, capture pupils' interest and make learning enjoyable.
- Teachers develop pupils' learning successfully by insisting upon the correct use of mathematical terms and using questioning and equipment effectively to probe and extend pupils' understanding.
- Assessment is used well to measure pupils' learning, set meaningful targets to help them improve and, in most instances, to provide tasks that are challenging and well matched to pupils' different learning needs.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding and progress at regular intervals during group activities. This helps them to know whether to pause or move the lesson on more quickly. Just occasionally, pupils' understanding is not checked as thoroughly when the whole class is taught together.
- Interactive white boards are used imaginatively to illustrate difficult mathematical ideas such as angular measure. However, insufficient use is made of computers in mathematics lessons to extend learning, particularly that of more able pupils.
- Pupils are well supported in their learning by teachers and assistants and the marking of their work provides helpful comments on how they can improve. Pupils are developing the skills and confidence to assess their own learning.

#### Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Clear policies and guidance help teachers to implement a well-structured curriculum that develops pupils' understanding, enables them to build on earlier learning and enjoy the subject.
- The curriculum is sensitively adjusted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities and the very few at an early stage of learning English.
- The school has begun to extend the curriculum to cater for able, gifted and talented pupils through links with other schools, although there is still more to do in this area.
- Most aspects of mathematics are thoroughly planned for, although the use of cross-curricular links to give pupils a taste of using mathematics in real-life situations are not capitalised upon as much as they could be.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- The subject leader makes an outstanding contribution to the school through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teachers' planning, pupils' work and assessments. The information is used particularly well to provide action plans that guide future developments. This underpins the school's good capacity for improvement.
- Measuring the performance of individual pupils, groups and whole classes and setting challenging targets to close any attainment gaps and promote more effective learning are key strategies in driving the school forward.
- When leaders observe lessons, important qualities of teaching are evaluated but their impact on pupils' conceptual understanding are not always pinpointed to the same degree.

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

- The school makes every effort to ensure that teaching is of good quality through lesson observation and identifying areas where teaching can improve further.
- Teachers have gained valuable insights into how pupils learn by observing others teach, such as mathematics consultants from the local authority.
- The school possesses expertise in the teaching of mathematics, which is shared amongst all staff. Consequently all teachers' subject knowledge improves.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reviewing the use of commercial schemes and classroom computers to ensure a consistently good level of challenge for more able pupils
- ensuring that pupils' understanding is always checked during the parts of the lesson that involve whole-class teaching

- when planning the curriculum, identifying more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills to solve real problems in other subject areas.

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

As explained in our previous letter, 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