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Mr B Desmond  
Headteacher  
Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mr Desmond

### **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 29 September 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; observation of four mathematics lessons, including some paired observations; and a meeting with a group of pupils.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

#### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Attainment has risen in the last couple of years and is now average. In 2008, 54% of Year 6 pupils reached the expected Level 4 or higher, which is much lower than average and only 15% attained the higher Level 5. These figures rose in 2009 to 83% and 21% respectively. In 2010, the school did not participate in the national test arrangements but did conduct some moderated tests, the results of which show that around 86% achieved the expected level and almost a third the higher level.
- There are variations in performance over time and between classes. In 2009, the progress made by pupils in mathematics was significantly below that of other schools, and placed the school amongst the lowest 15% nationally. Improvements since mean pupils' progress is now satisfactory.

- Children enter school with skills in mathematics that are below those expected. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is similarly close to the national average although the results in 2010 were slightly lower than in 2009. There are no significant differences in progress between the various groups of pupils although work books indicate that pupils make stronger progress in Years 5 and 6.
- The school's use of pupils' performance data to quickly identify where extra help may be needed is a particular strength. This accurate assessment system is one of the reasons why the school has managed a considerable 'step up' in attainment.
- Pupils show an enthusiasm for mathematics that is impressive.

### **Quality of teaching of mathematics**

The quality of teaching of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers plan well for their mathematics lessons and use a range of strategies to enthuse pupils, including good use of interactive whiteboards. Lessons are structured well with use of brisk timings and careful monitoring of pupils' performance. Some of the teaching was particularly energetic and supportive, which generated real enjoyment.
- A clear focus on the teaching of basic number skills has contributed to the increase in attainment since 2008. The school has recently identified the need to enhance this with additional resources to support other aspects of mathematics, such as problem-solving and investigative activities. Because these resources are not yet in place, the teaching of number work is generally stronger than for other more open-ended activities.
- Teachers encourage pupils to assess their own understanding through marking and during lessons, especially through the use of 'talk partners'. As a result, pupils have an accurate idea of what they need to do to improve and how well they are doing although much of this is focused on number work rather than on other aspects of mathematics.
- The school conducts regular monitoring of the quality of teaching of mathematics. Since 2008, this has included well over 50 mathematics lessons and shows that around half of them were judged to be good with very few inadequate sessions. There are, however, some common weaknesses. These include missed opportunities to correct pupils' misunderstanding and errors, especially when pupils are trying to explain insecurities they still have. Other limitations include imprecise use of mathematical vocabulary and questioning by some teachers, over reliance on telling pupils what to do while not checking for understanding, and few opportunities for pupils to explore a range of strategies to solve problems.

### **Quality of the mathematics curriculum**

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- Recently, the school has engaged in a national programme to improve standards and pupils' progress. As a result, the curriculum was reviewed in

2008 and was adapted to emphasise the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Additional activities, including 'booster' sessions, tailored support for underachieving groups, and some innovative extra-curricular clubs contribute to pupils' improved achievement. An example of this is the 'stay and play' session after school on Fridays – an increasingly popular provision for families and pupils to share mathematics together.

- Older pupils say that homework is regular and appropriate although a little dry at times and based too heavily on mathematics test practice. Conversely, 'Investigation Days' (when the whole school spends time on various mathematical activities) are popular but occur infrequently. As a result, investigation is seen by the pupils as an extra rather than as an integral part of their mathematics curriculum and where important links are forged between aspects of the subject.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics**

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

- Leadership of mathematics is shared by two teachers. They use data effectively. Self-evaluation is accurate. A particularly strong school improvement plan reflects appropriate strands of mathematics to develop: to increase skills in using and applying mathematics and to enhance provision for more able pupils. All of this, alongside recent improvements, shows a good capacity to improve.
- The subject managers have an ambitious plan to enhance the level of resources. Senior leaders are monitoring the impact of some high rates of pupils' absence on mathematical performance. Colleagues support each other well but not yet in a systematically planned way, for example to enhance questioning skills.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- developing the curriculum by integrating an increased amount of problem-solving and investigative work
- improving the use of questioning to assess and deepen pupils' understanding of mathematics.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Ceri Morgan**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**