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Mrs L Barnes  
Headteacher  
Middle Barton School  
27 Church Lane  
Middle Barton  
Chipping Norton  
OX7 7BX

Dear Mrs Barnes

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the assistant headteacher, the staff and pupils, during my visit on 17 February 2011 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, a governor and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of parts of five lessons and two intervention sessions.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is inadequate. Leaders have not driven and secured improvement, in particular on the areas identified at the previous inspection.

#### **Achievement in mathematics**

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Children enter this village school at age four with differing levels of knowledge and skills. They make at least satisfactory progress in the Reception year. Because numbers in each year group are small, caution has to be exercised over interpreting the results of national tests and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Overall, however, attainment is broadly average.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress. The school did not participate in the Key Stage 2 tests in 2010. Teacher assessments indicate that progress recovered from a dip in 2009 although fewer pupils than average reached the higher Level 5 at Key Stage 2. Boys made stronger progress than girls.

- The quality of learning is satisfactory. Behaviour is good. Many pupils are enthusiastic and confident but others are passive, particularly girls.
- One-to-one intervention with teaching assistants helps low-attaining pupils to overcome particular difficulties and increase in confidence.

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

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Strengths in the teaching include positive relationships between staff and pupils and well-established routines. Teachers plan a range of activities but sometimes pupils spend too long 'on the carpet' in the introductory part of the lesson. The quality of questioning and dialogue varies: inaccurate use of mathematical vocabulary means explanations and questions are occasionally not fully understood by pupils.
- Teaching does not always cater fully for the wide range of needs in each class, most of which contained two year groups. In some lessons, the least able did not grasp the ideas being discussed while, in others, the most able were not stretched by the tasks set.
- The school has worked on improving assessment, particularly of number, as part of the Assessing Pupils' Progress initiative. Good assessment practice was observed in the Reception/Year 1 class. In another, pupils had lists of targets in their books. Self-assessment through systems such as thumbs up or smiley faces are used to check understanding in some classes. Most work in pupils' books is marked regularly, and sometimes identifies the source of errors.

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

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teachers use the Primary National Strategy Framework and various other published resources to plan lessons. While this gives adequate coverage of the mathematics curriculum, teachers are not given guidance on how best to plan for mixed-age classes to secure good progression from one year to the next, or on approaches that promote conceptual understanding, such as using computer software to develop understanding of angles.
- The youngest pupils enjoy a range of practical activities, including some outdoors. All pupils learn how to solve short problems expressed in words but have few opportunities to tackle more complex problems or investigate mathematical ideas. Work is sometimes linked superficially to cross-curricular themes rather than presenting mathematics in a real context.

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

Leadership and management in mathematics are inadequate.

- Significant weaknesses in leadership and management have impeded improvement in pupils' achievement and have meant that teachers' skills are not being enhanced. Although the subject leader has very recently

conducted a few lesson observations, the lack of systematic monitoring of teaching, pupils' work and teachers' lesson planning means that neither you nor the subject leader are able to pinpoint and tackle inconsistencies or weaknesses in teaching or the curriculum. During the inspection, teachers readily discussed ideas of how they might improve their practice.

- Although you analyse pupils' progress, this does not lead to discussion with teachers or the subject leader. Formal assessments are not analysed by topic to identify strong and weak aspects of pupils' learning and therefore do not inform the development of the curriculum or teaching.
- The quality of improvement planning is unsatisfactory. Intended outcomes are not sharply defined and identified actions do not link clearly to them. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are not specified. No timelines or professional development needs of staff are identified.
- The areas for improvement identified in the school's previous inspection report in April 2009 were 'to increase the number of pupils reaching the higher level at the end of Year 6, particularly in mathematics', and 'to ensure that all teachers with responsibilities play an active role in monitoring and evaluating provision and standards in their areas'. The school has made insufficient progress in both areas in relation to mathematics.
- The link governor for mathematics gives helpful regular support in lessons. More widely, the governing body does not hold the school sufficiently to account for its work in mathematics. Two concerns about safeguarding were raised with the governor and senior staff during the inspection.

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

- raising the quality of teaching to at least good, focusing particularly on:
  - sequencing learning within lessons, ensuring that planned activities enhance pupils' understanding and meet the diverse range of ages, needs and abilities in each class
  - providing good-quality feedback to staff on their teaching, coupled with appropriate professional development
- providing curricular guidance for teachers on:
  - planning for progression in mathematical topics, particularly in mixed-age classes
  - extending opportunities for pupils to investigate, use and apply mathematics
- introducing a programme of systematic, rigorous monitoring of provision, using the outcomes to identify strengths and weaknesses, evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken, and pinpoint next steps in driving improvement.

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

This visit has raised concerns about the school's work including some safeguarding issues. I will report these to the Regional Divisional Manager who will consider what action to take and may arrange an inspection of the whole school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Jane Jones**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**