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7 March 2011

Mrs A Hemmings
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hemmings

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 with David Knighton HMI on 1 March 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 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.

- Children's mathematical knowledge and skills on joining the school vary but by the end of the Reception year, almost all reach expected levels and more children than is typical nationally reach the highest scores on Early Years Foundation Stage assessments.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 1. Girls, who are in the minority in most classes, and the more able pupils achieve less well than their peers.
- Data from national Key Stage 2 tests and teacher assessments suggest that pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2. However, the data do not tell the whole story. The school, although still small, has grown in size by around a third in the last couple of years. Nearly half of the pupils

in Year 6 in each of the last three years joined the school part way through Key Stage 2, sometimes with significant additional needs. They nevertheless still made the expected two levels of progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the individualised care and learning support that they receive. While learning and progress are good overall in Key Stage 2, not enough of the more able pupils are reaching their full potential.

- A particular strength of mathematics across the school is the emphasis on practical activities, problem-solving and investigative activities within mathematics lessons and through major topics in which the whole school engages. Pupils' achievement in 'using and applying mathematics' is good. They tackle a range of problems with energy and determination, drawing on a variety of strategies and explaining their thinking well. For example, groups of Year 3/4 pupils grappled with the problem of trying to find the volume of models of pot-holes. They realised for themselves the inherent difficulties as carefully measured water seeped away, and had to turn to other materials such as sand, gravel and centimetre cubes instead.
- Pupils' learning is further aided by their excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning mathematics. Pupils collaborate well on practical tasks and sustain concentration when working individually.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teaching is good in some classes and none observed was less than satisfactory. Common strengths include teachers' choice of imaginative activities that capture pupils' interest although planning often lacks clarity, particularly with practical activities, about the intended mathematical learning. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently good progress. Staff know each pupil well and tailor tasks to the needs of different groups, deploying additional adults effectively, although not always challenging the more able fully from the outset of the lesson. Mathematical vocabulary is used accurately by adults and pupils.
- Teachers' use of assessment is good. Records for each pupil are carefully annotated and supported by evidence including photographs and photocopied work on mini-whiteboards. The use of *Assessing Pupils' Progress* materials is developing well, with particularly good examples of notes of discussions that give insight into pupils' understanding. In the best lessons, questioning and dialogue were used particularly effectively to make pupils think hard, with well-judged follow-up questions.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Teachers make good use of the Primary National Strategy framework in planning lessons, taking into account up to four yearly programmes in striving to meet the diverse range of needs and abilities in each mixed-age class. This is supplemented by a wide range of outdoor, practical, and

investigative activities and opportunities to use information and communication technology.

- In addition to daily mathematics lessons, pupils have good opportunities to apply mathematics in the meaningful contexts provided by the school's cross-curricular topics that span several weeks' work. This approach is creating independent learners who enjoy learning mathematics and are ready to use their mathematics flexibly in varied situations.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

Leadership and management in mathematics are satisfactory.

- A very recent change in subject leadership has brought renewed vigour and considerable experience to the role. The subject leader's honest audit of the subject shows her good grasp of the strengths and relative weaknesses in provision, practice, and leadership and management. She is clear about how the latter should be tackled. For instance she knows, and has previously made use of, analysis of assessments enables areas of the curriculum where pupils' progress is weaker to be identified, followed by staff guidance and/or development. Capacity to improve is good.
- A limited amount of monitoring, for instance of teachers' planning and pupils' work, has been carried out. Records of lesson observations are generic in nature and do not help pinpoint the mathematical detail necessary to support improvement, for instance in providing suitable challenge for more able pupils.
- This year's action plan for mathematics identifies some important priorities but is imprecise about timescales, lacks arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation of planned actions, with no checks against interim milestones or arrangements for professional development.
- The work of the close-knit team of staff is aided by ongoing discussions about provision, often at the level of individual pupils. Pupils' progress is monitored and extra support provided quickly, frequently in liaison with parents. The school's ethos is reflected in the success it has in settling pupils new to the school, especially those who have additional needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers are clear about pupils' intended learning through the planned mathematical activities, particularly those that are practical or more open-ended
 - providing appropriate challenge throughout the lesson for more able pupils
- improving the effectiveness of monitoring, evaluation and action planning.

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

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector