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Mr G Barker
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Barker

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit with Sue Sharkey, Additional Inspector, on 11 October 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; observation of two lessons and brief visits to seven others.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is satisfactory.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Pupils join the school with mathematical knowledge and skills in line with those expected for their age, though weaker in calculation. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage so that their attainment is above average by the end of Reception.
- Attainment is broadly average. While the school has a track record of above average attainment in Key Stage 1, the improving trend in Key Stage 2 faltered in the last two years, reflecting satisfactory progress for both cohorts of pupils. Many current Year 6 pupils underachieved earlier in Key Stage 2. They need to make rapid progress to make up lost ground.
- The quality of learning is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage but satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 where it does not build sufficiently on

what pupils already know and can do to ensure that all are challenged to reach their potential. Some weaknesses in teaching result in gaps in pupils' conceptual understanding.

- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning contribute positively to their progress. Pupils collaborate well, listen attentively and are willing to explain their reasoning. They say they enjoy mathematics lessons, particularly when they solve real-life problems.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage where teachers and teaching assistants work in effective partnership. The key area for development in this stage is in the use of the outdoor environment. Strengths of the teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 include the positive relationships, which promote pupils' confidence, and use of discussion. In some lessons, pupils' understanding was furthered through teachers' good questioning and one-to-one interactions with teaching assistants.
- Teachers work in teams that span two year groups and plan lessons collaboratively. However, not enough account is taken of pupils' prior learning, needs and potential, particularly in the mixed-age classes, to secure good progress. Greater clarity is required about what pupils should learn and how planned activities will lead to that learning.
- While teachers used a range of resources to support problem-solving activities in the lessons observed, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work indicate that worksheets are often used, many of which are repetitive in nature. Sometimes, all the pupils in a class tackle the same work. Few visual and practical resources or mathematical equipment were used to support pupils' understanding.
- The use of assessment is inconsistent. Some marking is helpful but more just indicates whether answers are right or wrong. Each Year 6 pupil has a self-assessment booklet, but these do not align with the curricular targets in their exercise books which are common to all in the year group.
- The school has recently started to work with a mathematics consultant. An audit of teachers' subject knowledge is planned. Subsequent development would then offer a potential benefit of strengthening teachers' use of mathematical terminology and skills in developing pupils' conceptual understanding, for instance of geometric shapes and their properties and the number system, operations and their inverses.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is satisfactory.

- Use of the Primary National Strategy framework and textbook resources ensures adequate coverage of the mathematics curriculum but without ambitious challenge for all pupils. Pupils have some opportunities to solve problems and also to use mathematics within the half-termly topics and

other subjects. The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been suitably adapted to take account of the high proportion of boys.

- Information and communication technology is underused in mathematics: pupils said that they do not use computers very often, and it is teachers rather than pupils who use the interactive whiteboards. The school has recently replaced the laptop computers for each pupil in Years 5 and 6.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is satisfactory.

- The leadership of mathematics reflects the school's distributed-leadership model. This has several strengths but it is not clear who has an overview. Staff collaborate well: whole-school in-service training fed into action plans for mathematics, ensuring all staff's involvement in improvement planning.
- Thorough analysis of assessment information enables leaders to identify and focus upon weaker aspects, for instance calculation. Pupils' progress against their targets is monitored and those who are underachieving are identified. Provision of one-to-one support is planned.
- Monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is insufficiently rigorous to pinpoint issues about pupils' progress and learning. Evaluation of teaching is too generous: it recognises pupils' engagement and generic strengths of the teaching but does not probe the gains pupils make in mathematical knowledge, skills, and understanding. Development areas are not followed up swiftly with support and further checks to drive rapid improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the quality of teaching by ensuring that lesson planning and teaching focus on developing understanding, take account of pupils' starting points, individual needs and potential, and provide a good variety of activities, indoors and out, which are well matched to the intended learning
- providing guidance for staff on teaching approaches that support conceptual development and progression
- improving the rigour of first-hand monitoring of teaching, lesson planning and pupils' work, paying close attention to mathematical detail, following up areas for improvement swiftly, and sharing good practice.

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