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Mrs L Woodburn
Headteacher
Dalton St Mary's C of E Primary School
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Dear Mrs Woodburn

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 on 1 November 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 two lessons and brief visits to six others.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children enter the school with mathematical knowledge and skills below what is typical for their age but is often weaker in calculation. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception Year, their attainment is average but is lower in calculation, particularly for boys.
- Pupils' learning and progress have varied over the last few years, in part due to previous instability in staffing. Overall, pupils' progress is good. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average with current Year 6 pupils working closer to levels that are above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. They receive effective support and as a result make good progress. For instance, when Year 6 pupils were

recording data, good questioning by adults ensured that pupils' thinking was challenged.

- Pupils develop a secure understanding of fractions and are able to apply their skills and knowledge during problem-solving activities in mathematics as well as in context in different areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils behave well in mathematics lessons. They quickly settle into activities with enthusiasm. They say they enjoy mathematics because of the wide range of activities provided both in the classroom and outdoors.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teaching of mathematics in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Activities and resources are well planned so that children enjoy exploring and learning mathematics. Teachers have an appropriate focus on calculations and adapt activities to ensure that girls and boys are engaged fully. Mathematics has a high profile in the classroom but this is not as evident in outdoor work and play.
- Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good overall. Relationships between pupils and adults are strong, helping to promote pupils' eagerness to respond and enter willingly into discussions. Teaching assistants are generally well deployed, providing good support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Teachers plan exciting activities ensuring pupils acquire mathematical skills and knowledge so that they can solve problems successfully. However, work is not always matched to pupils' abilities and prior attainment and, as a result, does not sufficiently challenge pupils to achieve the higher levels. Recent changes to planning ensure that equipment is available so that pupils learn the most appropriate practical resource for the task.
- Teachers monitor pupils' work throughout lessons. They use questioning well to check and adapt activities to deepen pupils learning. Although, assessment is used effectively to reshape pupils' learning during lessons, teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always help them to know what they have to learn next or how they might improve.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- Teachers use the Primary National Strategy framework for planning mathematics lessons and they also thread mathematics successfully throughout the curriculum. Pupils say this helps them realise how important mathematics is in their everyday lives. The school makes very good use of the classroom and the immediate outdoor areas to secure the progressive development of mathematical concepts. This enriches the curriculum and aids pupils' enjoyment of mathematics. Although most resources are used well, those related to information and communication

technology (ICT) are underused in supporting the development of pupils' independent learning.

- The school has a clear homework policy and pupils are provided with activities to take home. Parents and carers are pleased with this arrangement and enjoy joining in with their children while providing support.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- Leaders have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. They have initiated a wide range of strategies which are proving to be successful, indicating that pupils are working closer to levels above the national average.
- Pupils' work in mathematics has a low profile in displays around the school, particularly within other subjects.
- Regular monitoring of pupils' individual progress ensures that any potential underachievement or weaknesses in pupils' mathematical understanding are quickly identified and support provided.
- Leaders have high expectations; they provide clear guidance to staff and regularly carry out monitoring activities including lesson observations. Follow-up actions are quickly implemented to secure improvements. To ensure that staff have strong subject knowledge, the subject leader regularly carries out appropriate training in school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - improving the match of activities to pupils' starting points so that more able pupils are suitably challenged to reach the higher levels
 - providing more helpful feedback to pupils on their work
 - using ICT resources to support pupils' independent learning
- raising the profile of mathematics by displaying pupils' work throughout the school, particularly its application in other subjects and showing how pupils learn mathematics in the outdoor environment.

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

Sue Sharkey
Additional Inspector