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23 November 2011

Mrs C Hallett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hallett

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 11 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; observation of one lesson; brief visits to two others; and a learning walk around the school.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children enter the school with mathematical skills and knowledge below what is expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that by the end of the Reception Year their attainment is average.
- Attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2 fluctuates from year to year due, in part, to the small numbers in different year groups. It is above average overall. In response to a dip in mathematics attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2011, more able pupils now receive mathematical support that challenges their thinking, extends their learning and deepens their conceptual understanding. Good learning, as observed in lessons and through scrutiny of pupils' work, points to above average attainment for current Year 6 pupils.

- Progress is good overall in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-focused support and make good progress.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about mathematics and speak highly of their lessons. They have good attitudes, are confident learners and listen extremely well, responding eagerly to questions. Pupils say one of the reasons they enjoy mathematics is the 'new things' they often learn.

Quality of teaching in mathematics

The quality of teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teaching of mathematics in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Within a stimulating environment, well-chosen activities excite children and support their early mathematical learning. Adults have good expectations of children and encourage them to join in practical activities and discussions.
- Teaching is good overall. Strengths include the use of different teaching styles often drawing on a wide range of resources. The use of interactive whiteboards aids visual learning while practical activities support pupils who prefer a 'hands-on' approach. Teachers' lesson planning accommodates pupils' different styles of learning to develop their conceptual understanding.
- Teachers explain new concepts well. Pupils say they quickly understand what they have to do. Pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills are used in problem solving. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, were able to use their knowledge of area and perimeter when they were designing a park, ensuring that all the different components had enough space. Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups and teachers use this approach well to aid discussion and stimulate learning. The pupils evaluate each other's work and peer observation is used effectively, particularly at the end of lessons.
- Teachers monitor pupils' understanding of mathematics throughout lessons, often through questioning. However, questions are not always used consistently well to extend pupils' knowledge as well as deepen their understanding.
- Lessons contain a good range of activities to enthuse pupils. However, the level of challenge is not consistently high. This was evident in pupils' books where, on a few occasions, pupils of different abilities had carried out the same work.

Quality of the curriculum in mathematics

The quality of the curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The mathematics curriculum caters well for girls and boys and suitable adjustments are made to accommodate pupils' individual needs. The school uses the Primary National Strategy framework to plan appropriately for the mixed-aged classes. Mathematics is taught mostly as a discrete

subject. It is occasionally linked to other subjects but this is not common practice. Planning makes good use of the outdoors to widen the range of practical activities. This helps to secure pupils' mathematical understanding while enriching the curriculum.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well by teachers and pupils to stimulate interest and engage learning. Pupils are able to use computers and other ICT resources regularly to support and extend their learning in mathematics.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics

The effectiveness of leadership and management in mathematics is good.

- Through an accurate view of the quality of provision, which is underpinned by regular monitoring, leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses in the school's work in mathematics. The subject leader analyses rigorously pupils' assessment information to ensure that any gaps in pupils' learning are addressed swiftly. She has clear action plans to secure improvements in attainment and pupils' progress. Systems to monitor pupils' assessment and progress allow underachievement and weaknesses in pupils' understanding to be identified quickly and appropriate support provided.
- The subject leader has carried out an audit of staff needs in mathematics to ensure that they all have appropriate subject knowledge. Staff attend training regularly. The subject leader often shares information to keep staff up to date, when there is a new initiative, for example.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making better use of information on pupils' prior attainment to provide further challenge for pupils and ensuring that teachers' questioning during lessons helps them to develop a deeper understanding of mathematics
- extending the use of mathematics within other subjects, particularly through problem solving.

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 J Sharkey
Additional Inspector