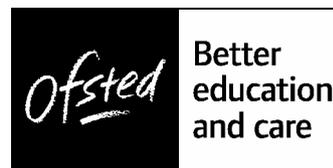


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23 November 2006

Mr N Brown
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brown

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 and 17 November 2006 to look at work in mathematics. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on pupils' enjoyment and understanding of 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of 10 lessons or parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject, mathematics, was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards of work are, by the end of Years 6 and 8, above average, representing satisfactory achievement.
- Pupils acquire knowledge and skills better than they gain understanding of mathematical ideas.
- Good work is undertaken to make sure that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are able to keep up with others, but the most able are not stretched enough.
- Pupils want to do well but lack confidence in their mathematical abilities. They are often diffident in the way they answer questions.

- Pupils work sensibly in pairs and small groups, but too rarely are able to work independently.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Lessons have a good structure, and teachers know their subject well enough to present it clearly to pupils.
- Good use is made of new technologies, such as data projectors, to present work to pupils.
- Tasks are not modified or extended to ensure that the most able pupils are stretched and challenged to do their best.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their capabilities in using and applying mathematics.
- Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory and is improving, with pupils beginning to undertake self-assessment. However, marking does not provide pupils with enough guidance on how they can improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The scheme of work sets out a clear plan that ensures balanced coverage of the different aspects of the subject and for progression. It does not, however, give teachers enough guidance on how they should teach topics.
- Not enough attention is paid to teaching pupils about how the application of information and communication technology supports their learning in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The senior management team in the school gives a strong, clear, lead and holds the department to account well.
- Evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the department are accurate and improving in thoroughness.
- The department functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis, with policies and routines followed well.
- The plan for improvement does not focus enough on how to improve teaching and learning in mathematics.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Most pupils work hard and want to do well, though for most this means getting the right answer rather than understanding why. Pupils lack confidence, especially in their ability to explain their thinking or to try new ideas and this lowers their enjoyment of the subject. Pupils acquire knowledge and develop basic skills reasonably well, because this is what teachers concentrate on. Most lessons do not help pupils to gain an understanding of mathematical ideas. There is too little independent work for pupils to engage in and they rarely work in small groups to develop their study skills.

Inclusion

There is a sound commitment to equal opportunities. Good support for pupils who have difficulty in learning mathematics means that they make similar rates of progress to other pupils. Not enough care is taken to ensure that the most able pupils are stretched and challenged to improve the quality of their work and achieve their best.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the quality of mathematical dialogue in classrooms so that pupils gain more confidence in developing their mathematical thinking and reasoning
- enrich approaches to teaching so that pupils' capabilities in using and applying mathematics are developed alongside their learning of other aspects of the subject
- modify classroom organisation and activities so that all pupils, and particularly the most able, are stretched and challenged to do their best.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

George Knights
Additional Inspector