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Mrs H Taylor
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Dear Mrs Taylor

Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 February 2008 to look at work in mathematics.

As outlined in our initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the effectiveness of the school's approaches to improving the quality of teaching and learning 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

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 four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is outstanding and standards are above average.

- Pupils make exceptionally good progress from low starting points, building on their learning very effectively as they move through the school.
- Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage because mathematics is integral to their daily routines and is all around them in classroom displays and resources.
- As pupils get older, they take more responsibility for their own learning, know their targets and thoroughly enjoy working independently as well as with partners or in small groups.

- Pupils often find it difficult to express their ideas in words, particularly when asked to explain how or why they chose a particular method to solve a problem.
- A key ingredient in pupils' outstanding achievement is their unbridled enjoyment of learning. They are extremely well-motivated and have very positive attitudes in lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is outstanding.

- Teachers' perceptive and probing questions develop pupils' conceptual understanding and challenge them to think things through for themselves.
- Pupils enjoy learning because teachers create imaginative situations for them to explore and investigate. For example, Year R/1 pupils were very excited as they discovered the shapes that the 'shape fairy' had scattered around the room.
- Whenever teachers ask pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner, which happens at very well chosen moments during each lesson, there is a real buzz of excitement as pupils share their thoughts, suggest solutions or work out answers.
- Visual and practical learning is exceptionally well planned. Year 1/2 pupils vastly improved their understanding of length by estimating and then measuring four imaginary dogs' sticks, squids' eyes and sharks' teeth.
- Rigorous ongoing assessment, combined with challenging targets, involves pupils and their parents in checking their progress at regular intervals.
- Teachers evaluate their planning daily to ensure that pupils are ready to move on to the next stage in learning.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is exceptionally well planned to build on pupils' learning as they progress through the school. 'Using and applying mathematics' is integrated very well within all strands of the subject.
- Mathematics is at the heart of the creative curriculum and this brings it to life for the pupils as well as linking it imaginatively with other subjects. This is one of the main reasons why pupils derive such enjoyment from lessons.
- The use of computer technology provides an added dimension to pupils' learning, especially through the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- There is an excitement amongst all staff about the way mathematics is developing throughout the school.
- All actions to improve teaching and learning stem from exceptionally thorough evaluation of teaching and learning and analysis of pupils' progress.
- As part of the local cluster, the school is in the forefront of innovative approaches to teaching mathematics through story. A fine example is the work already completed on the 'Egg Drop' and 'Santa's Little Helper' projects.
- Inspirational but achievable targets and rigorous tracking of each pupil's progress involve all staff and ensure that pupils do not 'slip through the net'.

- A very close partnership with parents, which includes courses to improve parents' own skills, provides valuable support to enhance pupils' learning.
- Governors play a key role in monitoring the effectiveness of the subject. They work closely with the subject leader to review the impact of new initiatives.

Subject issue: the effectiveness of the school's approaches to improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics

- Through high quality training and support, the whole staff team has embraced the revised framework and is committed to creating an exciting curriculum for the pupils.
- A key factor in the school's success is its collaboration with other local schools in innovative projects that are exploring creative approaches to teaching mathematics.
- A whole-school focus on speaking and listening in the context of problem-solving in mathematics is helping staff to improve the quality of learning for all pupils.

Inclusion

Inclusion in mathematics is outstanding.

- Rigorous analysis of each pupil's progress leads to prompt actions, where needed, to provide additional support.
- Flexible planning and mobility between classes enable the school to provide very well for pupils who need additional support and those who are gifted and talented. For example, a very able Reception child is taught alongside Year 1/2 pupils to provide him with additional challenge.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building upon the work in progress to develop pupils' ability to communicate their ideas and explain their reasoning.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector