

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs A Whitman
Headteacher
Curry Mallet CE Primary School
Taunton
Somerset
TA3 6TA

Dear Mrs Whitman

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 3 July 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 yourself and the subject leader, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of four lessons. Year 6 pupils were at a service at Wells Cathedral, but samples of their work and records of their progress were scrutinised. A discussion was held with pupils from Years 4 and 5.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good and standards are above average.

- Over a three-year period, results in national tests at the end of Year 6 have been well above national averages although small numbers in each year groups mean that standards can vary considerably. Results in 2009 are likely to be closer to average as there is a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in the cohort. The school's data shows that pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average and pupils' progress is satisfactory. The school has identified that there has been some underachievement in Key Stage 1 and is seeking to address this with

reorganisation of teaching arrangements this year. While there are some indications of positive impact, this is not yet evident in test results.

- Reception children are being taught separately and have made good progress this year. All are working at above expected levels and a few are working in the early stages of the National Curriculum.
- Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from well-targeted support and make good progress. More able pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and, as the school has identified, this is the main factor that affects overall standards at the end of Year 2.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Lessons are well planned and organised with clear learning objectives. The reorganisation of teaching arrangements this year is proving beneficial in providing appropriate practical experiences for Reception children. It is also narrowing the age range in other teaching groups, which usually include two year groups but allow for some flexibility to place pupils according to their abilities.
- Teachers respond well to individual pupils and recognise when they are unclear about specific mathematical concepts. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson where several pupils showed some confusion about the properties of triangles and different types of angles. The teacher immediately adjusted the lesson to revise work done previously on angles and to clarify pupils' understanding so that they could move on to a practical task that required them to apply this knowledge.
- Year 5 pupils have good knowledge of their targets and appreciate the 'highlighting' system that helps them to be particularly aware of what they should concentrate on. They enjoy the responsibility of assessing their own progress and show a good understanding of the levels at which they are working.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Planning is currently based on the original national numeracy strategy material supplemented by a commercial scheme. Good account is taken of the need to cater for mixed age classes in order to ensure continuity in pupils' learning. Work is underway to implement the new primary framework in the next academic year and to improve provision for using and applying mathematics.
- Good attention is paid to supporting pupils with learning difficulties and teachers' planning links with targets on their individual education plans. A gifted and talented pupil is benefiting from additional challenges organised through collaborative work with other small schools. Good use is made of a link with a local secondary school to extend provision for Years 5 and 6 pupils.
- A range of computer programmes is used to practise skills in number and calculation and to enhance provision for pupils with learning difficulties. However, pupils' work showed that some opportunities are missed to use information and communication technology (ICT), for example, to present and interrogate data in a variety of ways or to calculate using a variety of formulae.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory.

- Mathematics has not been a priority for improvement as the school has been focusing on literacy during this year. The subject leader is also the co-ordinator for special educational needs and has very limited time to focus specifically on mathematics.
- Useful work is carried out each year when the subject leader analyses pupils' performance in standardised tests. The information gained is fed back to class teachers so that they are aware of any gaps in learning and particular areas for focus in their planning and teaching.
- Apart from this analysis, monitoring is largely informal. Much information is disseminated and gained through discussion. Nevertheless, the school has an accurate view of areas for improvement and these are outlined in a brief action plan. While work has gone on to address the issues, the subject leader has not been able to evaluate the impact of, for example, strategies to ensure that more able pupils are appropriately challenged.

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

- The subject leader has attended training on setting curricular targets and the new primary framework. Information has been shared with colleagues at staff meetings. Systems for setting targets have been established in Key Stage 2 but not yet in Key Stage 1.
- One other teacher has attended training for the new primary framework this year and others are due to attend relevant training in the autumn term.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building on the good start made by Reception children this year to improve achievement in Key Stage 1, especially for more able pupils
- extending the use of ICT as a resource for learning
- implementing a more structured system for monitoring the impact of initiatives to improve provision in the subject.

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

Shirley Billington
Additional Inspector