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Ms E Ward
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Dear Ms Ward

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 May 2009 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 teachers and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons. The focus of the visit was on Key Stages 1 and 2.

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.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage profiles suggest that children have knowledge and skills below those typical for their age when they join the school. However, standards in mathematics are above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and remain above average through Key Stage 2, so progress is good overall.
- The school was created in September 2006 by merging the former infant and junior schools, following a year when you were headteacher of both the former schools. One of your first priorities was to ensure a consistent approach to assessment across Key Stages 1 and 2. This has indicated that progress in Key Stage 2 may be better than previously thought.

- The school has recognised that boys' progress in recent years has not been as good as girls' progress. Changes have been made to address this issue, but it is too early to tell whether they have been effective.
- Pupils' progress in using and applying mathematics is satisfactory. It is better in Key Stage 1 because the curriculum involves a more practical approach.
- Pupils want to succeed. They enjoy mathematics and have positive attitudes.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives. After a whole-class introduction, pupils work in groups according to their previous learning, so their different needs can be met. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- During the whole-class part of the lessons, pupils write on wipe-clean whiteboards and hold up their work for the teacher to see. This ensures that all pupils are engaged and allows the teachers to judge which pupils understand and which need extra support.
- Once pupils begin working in their groups, the teachers move purposefully around their classrooms to ensure that every pupil is making progress and to provide additional support or challenge where necessary.
- Pupils' understanding is promoted because teachers routinely expect pupils to explain their thinking. Pupils are also involved well in assessing their own and each others' work.
- Teachers use assessment well to help plan future lessons. For example, during one lesson, the teacher realised that pupils were not reliably able to distinguish regular from irregular shapes, and was already thinking about her next lesson.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has comprehensive schemes of work that make good use of the revised national framework for primary mathematics and guidance on assessing pupils' progress.
- There is clear guidance for teachers on the expected approaches to calculation, which helps maintain a consistent approach. All teachers use information and communication technology to support learning.
- Teachers endeavour to link mathematics to other subjects and to pupils' everyday experience, but the school recognises that pupils need more opportunities to use and apply mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, where there is less practical work. In addition, much of the mathematics work in pupils' books consists of single-step exercises to consolidate their learning. There are relatively few examples of problems that require pupils to combine two or more skills in a novel way.
- Some of the work on measurement and estimation is ineffective. For example, pupils do not have enough experience of weighing things to make realistic estimate of the weight of an object and they do not have enough practice of weighing out specific quantities to know roughly how much is required. In addition, pupils are sometimes expected to make estimates that require the use

of proportional reasoning or an understanding of capacity, before they have developed these concepts.

- The school has recently invested in interactive mathematical software that helps pupils to improve their skills and understanding. This is helping parents to become more involved with their children's learning, because pupils can access the resources from home.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- You and the mathematics co-ordinator have a well-planned approach to monitoring, which includes lesson observation, work scrutiny and analysis of data. As a result, you evaluate accurately and have appropriate priorities for improving mathematics.
- The school analyses data effectively to monitor the performance of groups. For example, when data suggested underachievement among pupils whose first language is not English, you investigated further. Other factors explained the slower progress and you concluded that the quality of language support was not in question.

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

- The school has made good use of local authority training to develop teachers' skills in assessment and their understanding of the primary mathematics framework. This has resulted in consistent and effective assessment.
- Teachers have good opportunities to improve their teaching by observing good practice in other schools. The mathematics co-ordinator is working with colleagues to help them develop teaching approaches that routinely expect pupils to use and apply the mathematics that they know.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- Improving pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics by:
 - ensuring that schemes of work include sufficient practical work, problem solving and other opportunities for using and applying mathematics
 - providing further professional development to improve teachers' expertise in getting pupils to use and apply the mathematics that they already know when tackling new topics.
- Reviewing the approach to teaching measurement and estimation to take into account pupils' conceptual development and to give more practical experience.

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

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector