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Dear Mr McHugh

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 2 June 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

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.

- According to school records, children enter school with knowledge and skills broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class. By the time they enter Year 1 their attainment is above that expected for their age in all areas of mathematics.
- Standards are rising in Key Stage 1 and are now above average by the end of Year 2. Good teaching is helping pupils to achieve well.
- Achievement is good overall in Key Stage 2 and particularly strong in Year 6. This is why standards have remained above average over recent years.

- Pupils achieve equally well in all aspects of mathematics, including their capacity to investigate and solve mathematical problems. Some pupils experience difficulties with calculations involving subtraction, division, fractions and decimals but teachers are working hard to support them.
- Pupils' different learning needs are well catered for and this enables all groups of pupils to achieve well, including the more able pupils and those who require additional support.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics, behave very well in lessons, give of their best and persevere in the face of a challenge.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- Very effective use is made of mathematical equipment to help pupils to understand relationships between numbers and properties of shapes.
- Teachers question pupils effectively to probe their understanding. They encourage them to explain their reasoning and ensure that they use mathematical vocabulary correctly.
- Assessment is used well to provide activities that are well matched to pupils' different learning needs and to ensure that they continue to make good progress.
- The marking of younger pupils' completed work provides very clear indicators on how they can improve further. However, marking is inconsistent in Key Stage 2 and pupils do not have individual targets to aim for. Consequently, pupils are not always in a strong position to know what they need to do to move forward.
- Teachers make effective use of interactive white boards to help pupils to visualise and understand difficult ideas but class computers are not used sufficiently to extend their learning.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Clear guidance for teachers on how to teach methods of calculation has now been provided to ensure that pupils' skills are built upon securely in the future.
- The curriculum includes many rich opportunities for pupils to play mathematical games and use and apply their skills to investigate and solve mathematical problems, often in real-life situations. These factors help to make their learning meaningful and enjoyable.
- The curriculum is sensitively adapted to cater for pupils' needs as they arise, for example by providing additional 'catch-up' activities when their learning falters.
- Although all pupils receive regular lessons in information and communication technology (ICT), its use in learning mathematics is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Your energy, leadership skills and capacity to develop staff have been key factors in improving provision and raising standards in mathematics.

- Careful analyses of assessments and teachers' planning, along with some shrewd observation of lessons has helped the school to identify correctly where improvements are required. Sharing the findings and taking prompt action to make improvements is having a positive impact on teaching and pupils' progress.
- Effective induction and good support and training, particularly for the new subject leader of mathematics, are driving work in mathematics forward.

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

- Teachers' secure subject expertise in mathematics is being enhanced through the involvement of a mathematics consultant to guide and strengthen good practice.
- Your good awareness of teachers' needs and your determination to provide training to improve their contributions, as teachers and leaders, have played a significant part in improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building on the good practice in Key Stage 1 by ensuring that all teachers set individual targets for pupils, include pointers for improvement when marking their work, and encourage pupils to assess their own learning to help them to improve
- make more effective use of ICT as a tool for learning mathematics.

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

Colin Smith
Additional Inspector