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19 June 2009

Ms L Tamblyn
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Dear Ms Tamblyn

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 18 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 five lessons or parts of lessons, pupils taking part in the mathematics orienteering exercise, and pupils in the Area Resource Base (ARB).

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement in mathematics is good. Standards are average.

- Children start the school with mathematical skills and aptitudes below those expected for their age. Standards in Key Stage 1 assessments show pupils make good progress to reach slightly below average standards. This represents a reversal of a downward trend since 2006 and the school is back on track for standards to be at, or slightly above, average. The progress of pupils observed within lessons was generally at least good.
- The school accurately assesses pupils' attainment across all areas of mathematics and uses its assessment of using and applying mathematics well to identify how

effective it has been in teaching for understanding, in conjunction with its aims as a 'Thinking School.'

- Pupils who have severe learning difficulties are challenged with their work in the ARB and they make good progress relative to their individual targets.
- Pupils were unanimous in their positive views of mathematics, saying teachers made sure they understood the work and that activities were enjoyable and challenging. Behaviour observed during the inspection was excellent.

Quality of teaching and learning of mathematics

The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good.

- There is great excitement and vibrancy in many lessons because staff provide a rich variety of tasks which engage pupils. Relationships are built upon mutual trust and respect and are a strength of the school.
- Teachers plan work that is well matched to groups of pupils. Lesson objectives are shared effectively but when the lesson involves aspects of reasoning or communication, lesson objectives do not consistently recognise how pupils are to improve these skills.
- Interactive whiteboards are used well by staff and pupils.
- Teachers question pupils effectively to identify any misconceptions. By ensuring pupils give full answers including reasons, teachers help pupils to gain a better understanding of the work.
- Assessment is outstanding. Staff get pupils to assess their own work regularly and to feedback on how they feel they are achieving. Marking in books is very good in identifying how well pupils have done and then giving advice on how they could improve further.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- The outstanding emphasis on developing thinking skills ensures pupils regularly use and apply their mathematics. Investigations are an established part of schemes of work and are often used to allow pupils to discover mathematical relationships for themselves. This approach, along with the way in which pupils complete tasks which need them to persevere with their work before getting help, is a good way of helping pupils learn through understanding.
- The school supports higher attaining pupils well. It also intervenes with key groups as they prepare for end-of-key-stage tests. This intervention is only towards the time of sitting the tests: the rest of the year is spent in developing good mathematical understanding through good teaching.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance mathematical work. Pupils say they use the laptops in most lessons. These opportunities are integrated into schemes of work across all year groups.

Leadership and management of mathematics

The leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- Your support for the subject during times of turbulence in subject leadership has ensured that standards in mathematics are rising again.

- The new subject leader has quickly gained a very good overview of the main strengths and weaknesses within mathematics but as yet, because of staff absence, these have not been based upon lesson observations. She has formulated an appropriate improvement plan.
- The subject leader supports colleagues well.

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

- An outstanding collegiate approach to mathematics is enabling progress in improving the quality of teaching to be accelerated.
- Training as part of the 'Thinking School' initiative has influenced the way in which mathematics is taught with a greater emphasis on improving understanding.
- Lesson observations by senior leaders are accurate and highlight appropriate areas for further development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring lesson objectives include elements of mathematical reasoning and communication so that these key strands carry on improving
- providing suitable opportunities for the subject leader to observe teaching as part of the school's monitoring programme.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector