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Dear Mrs Harrison

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 October 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 and three part lessons.

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

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

- According to school records, children enter school with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. They learn effectively and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the reception year their attainment is broadly in line with that expected for their age, although stronger in number and shape than in calculating and problem solving.

- Pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 their attainment is broadly average.
- Pupils' learning and progress are also satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Attainment is broadly average in Years 3, 4 and 5. Standards in Year 6 are below average because of the unusually high number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and others are still carrying a legacy of former underachievement. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to achieve their targets.
- Although the learning and progress of most pupils is now improving, some of the more able pupils are not reaching the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Pupils develop secure calculation skills and a firm grasp of mathematical ideas, involving numbers, shapes and data but find more difficulty in using and applying their skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils' good behaviour, concentration and interest in mathematics make a positive contribution to their learning.

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is satisfactory.

- Well-managed, efficiently organised and briskly paced lessons capture pupils' interest and engage them effectively in all aspects of mathematics.
- Assessment is used effectively to measure progress and to provide activities that are closely matched to most pupils' different learning needs. Pupils who find learning difficult are supported well, but there are still occasions when more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently.
- Teachers are largely successful in developing pupils' understanding through imaginative use of interactive whiteboards and mathematical apparatus. Some teachers are particularly adept in identifying and remedying pupils' misconceptions but not all teachers are able to operate at such a high level.
- Teachers mark pupils' work constructively and provide targets to indicate the next step. This ensures that pupils know what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is satisfactory with good elements.

- The school has thoroughly implemented the renewed framework to ensure that all aspects of mathematics are taught in such a way that pupils enjoy learning.
- Very clear guidance for teachers and parents on how to develop pupils' calculation skills is helping to raise achievement.
- Increasing opportunities are being provided for pupils to improve their investigation and problem-solving skills in mathematics lessons, in other subjects such as science, and through homework assignments. However, such opportunities are not equally represented in all classes.
- The curriculum is effectively adapted to provide additional activities to enable pupils, whose progress has slowed, to catch up.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of mathematics is good.

- Since your appointment as headteacher and role as subject leader, you have moved the school's work in mathematics forward considerably. Pupils' learning and progress have improved and standards are rising.
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of mathematics has enabled you to form a clear and accurate picture of teaching and learning. Sharing this information openly with all members of staff is proving effective in the drive to raise achievement.
- Identifying pupils whose progress has slipped and taking concerted action to put them back on target has helped to squeeze out much of the underachievement.

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

- You have been very effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in every age group with notable examples of good teaching.
- Working alongside the local authority's mathematics advisers and consultants and sharing your own subject expertise is increasing teachers' subject knowledge to enable them to develop pupils' conceptual understanding more effectively.
- Good levels of training and individual support for teachers are making a significant contribution to the school's work in mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the challenge for more able pupils to enable all of them to fulfil their potential
- making sure that opportunities for pupils to improve their capacity to use and apply their knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems are equally provided for in all classes
- ensuring that all teachers are adept in identifying and remedying pupils' misconceptions.

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