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Ms S Mumme
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Mumme

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 9 February 2010 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with you, the subject leader and groups of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of parts of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes because teachers plan a good variety of practical activities that develop their understanding of number, simple calculations, measures and shape.
- This good progress continues throughout Years 1 to 6 as pupils build systematically on their knowledge and understanding. As a result, attainment is rising and is now above average. Pupils of all abilities, including the high proportion who speaks English as an additional language, are catered for well and make good gains in their learning.

- Pupils tackle problems confidently, using appropriate strategies independently. However, they have too few opportunities to hone their skills in carrying out open-ended investigations, developing lines of enquiry and recording their methods and results systematically.
- Throughout the school there is a buzz of excitement in mathematics lessons as pupils engage in learning with enthusiasm and great enjoyment. One Year 4 pupil commented, 'Our teacher puts a lot of humour into it – it's great fun!'

Quality of teaching of mathematics

The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

- Pupils are challenged by well-planned tasks and activities that match their individual needs and capabilities, so learning proceeds at a brisk pace. Pupils learn through a wide variety of practical activities. They use interesting resources that reinforce their understanding of key concepts. For example, some Year 2 pupils used mirrors and an assortment of road signs and flags when investigating symmetry, while others used a computer game to build symmetrical patterns.
- Teachers and well-briefed teaching assistants support and encourage pupils to tackle problems independently, gently assisting through carefully phrased questions that help to develop pupils' understanding.
- Classrooms are alive with colourful and informative mathematical displays that support learning and are often referred to by pupils. Teachers consistently reinforce the use of mathematical vocabulary. In an excellent Year 4 lesson, the teacher constantly challenged pupils to use the right terms, such as 'horizontal', 'vertical', 'regular' and 'irregular'.
- There is a current focus on improving the consistency of teachers' marking and pupils' involvement in assessing their own progress. There are good examples of marking that show pupils the next steps in learning, but this is not consistent across the school. Similarly, self-assessment is working more effectively in some classes than others.

Quality of the mathematics curriculum

The quality of the mathematics curriculum is good.

- Teachers have embraced the revised framework for mathematics. A recent review of approaches to ensuring progression in early calculating skills has helped to improve teaching and learning across the school.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in real-life situations, such as cooking activities, and through other subjects. The planning of this aspect of mathematics is not sufficiently integrated into each block of work to enable pupils to extend their skills, for example in devising and recording investigations.
- Learning is enriched through a number of special events. For example, on residential trips, pupils use their knowledge of distances, timetables and drawing to scale and develop orienteering skills. A day on African culture

allowed pupils to use their mathematical knowledge when planning and preparing a meal.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of mathematics

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

- The subject leader provides an excellent role-model for staff, promoting good practice, sharing his expertise through regular training and support and generating huge enthusiasm for mathematics throughout the school. He has taken a very methodical approach to introducing the revised curriculum and to checking teachers' planning and observing lessons to gauge its impact.
- Last year, a thorough review of learning and teaching identified precisely where improvements were needed and led to well-planned actions, including the introduction of policies and teaching strategies. These are tackling inconsistencies in teaching and accelerating pupils' progress, successfully. The focus this year is on evaluating the full impact of this work.
- Careful monitoring of pupils' progress identifies those who have gaps in their learning. They are given specific support in 'priority support groups'. This is helping them to overcome difficulties and make good progress.

Subject issue: how well the curriculum secures progression in mathematical understanding for every pupil

- The subject leader has provided high-quality training for all staff on the implementation of the revised mathematics curriculum, focusing initially on planning and moving on to teaching strategies.
- By presenting teachers with insights into how learning progresses from year to year, training has successfully raised teachers' expectations.
- As a result of the mathematics review and their own self-evaluation, each teacher has a personalised action plan, backed up with support that is tailored to meet their individual needs. All teachers have performance management targets related to pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants have benefited from training in how to develop learning through asking open-ended questions. Their good practice was observed in several lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- finding creative ways to integrate using and applying mathematics into each block of work, especially open-ended investigative approaches
- ensuring more consistency in marking and self-assessment so that all pupils have a clear idea of how to improve.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop mathematics in the school.

As explained previously, 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

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector