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20 February 2014

Mrs S Matthews
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Matthews

Ofsted 2013–14 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 11 February 2014 to look at work 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of two lessons; and a number of short visits to four lessons with the mathematics leader.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- Results in national tests at Key Stage 2 have been consistently above average over the last three years and are improving. In recent years the proportions of pupils making the expected and better-than-expected rates of progress from Key Stage 1 were much higher than average.
- Children start school with skills much lower to other children nationally. In Reception their mathematical development accelerates rapidly due to high-quality teaching that has a sharp focus on solving problems. A new approach introduced this academic year to bridge children's understanding of mathematics, and its language is proving very successful.
- Throughout the school, pupils respond well to teachers' focus on the use of mathematical language. This is helping pupils to link mathematical ideas to the wider world and is enabling the many pupils for whom English is not their first language to overcome barriers to learning successfully.

- Pupils enjoy mathematics. Those who met with me were keen to demonstrate their mathematical ability. They spoke enthusiastically about strategies to solve questions such as 'take 16 away from 31' and 'multiply 2.7 by 10'. Pupils were very quick to support, help and explain to each other, for example when a younger pupil's response of 2.70 showed a misconception.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs receive good quality support in class and during small-group sessions. Practical apparatus are used well to help them overcome gaps in their learning.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Teaching across the school enables all groups of pupils to make good progress and be well prepared for secondary school. Careful planning develops pupils' fluent recall of their mathematical knowledge. Challenging work for more-able pupils, such as finding the surface area of irregular 3D shapes, makes them think hard.
- Lessons are often organised so that groups of pupils of similar ability work together. Targeted questioning meets the needs of each group effectively with challenge appropriate to their group. Careful listening to pupils' responses helps teachers to identify any misconceptions quickly.
- Pupils' mathematical vocabulary is enhanced by opportunities to work in pairs to discuss and solve problems. Year 1 pupils developed their use of mathematical language well when making, hiding, then describing 3D shapes to their partners. Adults prompted pupils to use mathematical terms carefully when describing the features of each shape.
- Teachers' marking is regular, consistent and appropriately detailed. Pupils report that they find teachers' marking helpful and can point to where they have acted upon points raised. The school is aware they would like to improve the effectiveness of marking in mathematics further by ensuring next steps are always provided.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The curriculum places a high priority on developing pupils' basic mathematical skills. Where possible and appropriate, they are taught through a problem-solving approach. Teachers use two main schemes and choose what they feel meets the needs of pupil's best, depending on the topic being taught.
- Detailed portfolios of work effectively illustrate pupils' mathematical work in other subjects and topics. Younger pupils created symmetrical patterns carefully when studying *The Tailor from Gloucester*. Older pupils used their knowledge of measurements, scale, area and perimeter accurately to design and make victory gardens when learning about World War II.
- The school used the findings from Ofsted's mathematical survey report '*Mathematics: made to measure*' to adapt their practice in Reception. Children now benefit from a variety of opportunities to become familiar with mathematics. Bead strings, for example, are used effectively to

develop a sense of pattern and sequence, while play-dough helps children to recognise numbers and amounts.

- Information and communication technology is used well to support mathematical learning. Pupils present their findings from data analysis using a variety of graphs, bar charts and pictograms. On-line resources, which pupils can access out of school, are enjoyed by the pupils and help with their basic calculation skills.

Leadership and management of mathematics are good.

- You and the mathematics leader have created a school where pupils and staff enjoy the subject. Interesting lessons, taught well, help develop pupils' core mathematical skills and ensure good progress is made. You are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of mathematics provision within the school and use performance management effectively to ensure all groups of pupils make good progress.
- The mathematics leader is capable and well respected. Good monitoring and evaluation have identified some further desired improvements to marking and the curriculum. Trialling by the mathematics leader of a new method of teaching that makes greater use of assessment is helping to inform the practice of others. A planned external review of the curriculum, in preparation for the new National Curriculum, should help inform how to develop pupils' conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills even further.
- The subject action plan articulates clear actions to bring about further improvements. Analyses of teachers' planning and pupils' work are used well to plan teachers' professional development needs. Six-weekly review meetings that focus on pupils' progress are effective in keeping leaders abreast of any issues.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the effectiveness of teachers' marking and feedback
- continuing with the planned review of the curriculum to develop pupils' conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills further.

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

As explained previously, this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector