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Mr A Mathieson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mathieson

Ofsted 2014–15 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 2 October 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' books; and observations in lessons.

The overall effectiveness of mathematics is good.

Leadership and management of mathematics are outstanding.

- The senior leadership team and the mathematics subject leader work seamlessly together to ensure that the drive for improvement in mathematics is ongoing, and fully complements other areas of the school's work.
- The subject leader's passion for her subject and her willingness to support staff are palpable. She is an experienced mathematics specialist teacher. Staff members value her advice and support.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are fully trained in the recent changes to the national curriculum and, as a result, teachers are confident in their teaching of the new programmes of study.
- Leaders are not complacent. They are continually looking for ways to improve their practice, and implement them swiftly in order to improve achievement. For example, they have planned changes to groupings in

Year 4 from next month in order to more accurately focus on the needs of pupils with different abilities.

- Detailed scrutiny and analysis of information about the achievement of pupils in mathematics enables the school to pinpoint additional support effectively.

The curriculum in mathematics is good.

- The new national curriculum in mathematics is being delivered in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 as required. The school is mindful of the implications of the raised expectations, and is ensuring that any gaps in knowledge as pupils move from the previous to the new national curriculum are filled. The subject leader is providing additional support and advice to teachers to ensure this transition is smooth.
- Leaders have adopted a clear planning structure which highlights mathematical concepts new to the curriculum for that year group. As a result, teachers can easily identify new concepts which should be taught.
- Teachers' planning includes suggested questions to ask pupils. These questions are probing and designed to develop thinking and reasoning skills. They encourage pupils to consider how they have reached an answer. As a result, pupils are starting to develop mathematical fluency. In order to track pupils' developing fluency, leaders have introduced 'pupil passports'. These will move through school with the pupils, recording their progress in the use of key mathematical concepts.
- Leaders are still considering how changes to the curriculum will affect the way they teach methods of calculation. They have recognised a need to emphasise the connectivity between the four rules of number.
- Early Years Foundation Stage provision is rich in mathematical experiences. Indoors and outdoors, children are encouraged to develop their counting and number skills. They are able to identify and describe shapes through a wide variety of activities such as finding hidden shapes in a tray of shaving foam.

Teaching in mathematics is good.

- Detailed planning, which is closely linked to the revised national curriculum, ensures a structured approach to the teaching of mathematics. Individuals and groups of pupils requiring additional support or challenge are identified on the plans.
- Teachers provide high-quality verbal feedback to pupils during lessons which moves learning on. They mark work regularly and consistently in accordance with the school's policy. Pupils have opportunities to respond to a further challenge, and they generally do so.
- Work in books, however, shows that the more able pupils in a teaching group sometimes complete a high number of similar problems without making an error, which suggests that these pupils are insufficiently challenged. They are spending time practising skills that are already embedded.

Achievement in mathematics is good.

- In 2014, achievement in mathematics was good. The proportion of pupils attaining expected levels at Key Stage 2 was just above average. The proportion attaining the highest levels is increasing year on year. The proportions making expected progress and more-than-expected progress was high. Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 achieved similar levels to their peers.
- At Key Stage 1 in 2014, the picture is equally strong. The proportion of pupils attaining expected levels, and exceeding these, was above average. However, in this year group, disadvantaged pupils were six months behind their peers.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the early learning goals in mathematics was very high in 2014 as a result of effective teaching within a learning environment which immersed the children in mathematical experiences.
- While teachers generally have high expectations of pupils, the more able within each teaching group are not always achieving as well as they could because they spend time practising skills they already have. The school has started to tackle this issue through, for example, setting these pupils a problem to solve at the start of a lesson. There is more work to do, however, as examples remain of pupils getting all their work correct and reporting that the work is too easy.
- Nevertheless, pupils are keen to learn and engage well in mathematics lessons. They show a curiosity about their learning and can use different methods to solve problems. For example, when four pupils were asked to find the total of 2, 4, 6, and 8, they each used a different method to reach the correct answer.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the achievement of more able pupils within each teaching group by ensuring that they are sufficiently challenged and moved on to more complex concepts and problems as soon as they are ready.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector