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Mr M Burton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Burton

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 November 2006 to look at work in mathematics. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on pupils' enjoyment and understanding of 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 made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

- Results in recent national tests and assessments have been broadly average, though with some pupils not doing as well as they should have.
- Improvements in teaching and learning enabled pupils to reach expected levels in 2006.
- Pupils learn basic skills and routines better than they grasp mathematical ideas.
- Pupils enjoy their mathematics and try hard, especially when they are challenged to do well. Many lack confidence in their ability to talk about their mathematics and they find retention of previously learned topics quite difficult.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teachers take good account of the different needs of pupils, providing activities that match pupils' previous attainment.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support individuals and groups who require additional support.
- In the best lessons, teachers ask sharply focused questions and encourage pupils to explain and describe their thinking accurately, but this is not always the case.
- Teachers generally structure lessons well, providing a variety of activities to help maintain pupils' attention.
- Most lessons end with a review of what has been happening, but some teachers do not use this time as effectively as other parts of the lesson to consolidate learning.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is good.
- Detailed and helpful marking includes clear statements of what pupils have achieved.
- Pupils are beginning to make self-assessments of their work, using the targets provided for them.

## Quality of the curriculum

The mathematics curriculum is satisfactory.

- Good steps have been taken to use investigative and problem-solving activities with the more able pupils. However, not enough attention is paid to ensuring that pupils of all abilities develop their capabilities in using and applying mathematics.
- The school recognises that it needs to provide more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in mathematics.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- You have evaluated the current quality of mathematics provision accurately and have taken decisive steps to raise standards.
- All staff are working well to bring about improvements and they have a clear picture of what they want to achieve. This is set out in a detailed and effective action plan.
- Effective monitoring of work in classrooms has given you a good grasp of strengths and areas where further development is needed.

Subject issue: pupils' enjoyment and understanding of mathematics

Engaging and challenging teaching promotes good levels of enjoyment. Pupils want to do well and when their efforts are rewarded with success and praise they 'blossom'. Teachers who question pupils closely, asking for explanations and maintaining discussion with them, are most successful in encouraging pupils' engagement with the subject. As they build up confidence in talking about their mathematics, pupils are more confident to try out ideas.

Pupils are better at learning skills and routines than they are in developing an understanding of mathematical ideas. This is because teachers have not given enough attention to developing pupils' capabilities in using and applying mathematics. Some attention is given to investigative work and to extended problem-solving, thereby encouraging pupils to improve their ability to work mathematically, but all pupils need opportunities to work in these ways.

### Inclusion

Good care is taken to ensure that all pupils achieve equally well; there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities continues to be good, as it was at the time of the last inspection, and the school has recently improved its provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building up pupils' confidence by engaging them more in oral explorations and explanations of their work
- modifying teaching and learning strategies so that pupils' capabilities in using and applying mathematics are developed across all aspects of the subject
- increasing the range of opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning in mathematics.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

George Knights  
Additional Inspector