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Mrs F Howarth
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Howarth

Ofsted 2014–15 subject survey inspection programme: mathematics

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 3 July 2015 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 evaluation of strengths and weaknesses included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation including schemes of work, departmental improvement plan, meeting minutes and students' progress data; analysis of students' work; and observation of lessons.

Leadership and management of mathematics

- Mathematics enjoys the support and commitment of senior leaders who ensure that appropriate resources are given to the subject. They provide challenge and support through regular line-management meetings. Senior leaders, the mathematics subject leaders and teachers have contributed to improvements in teaching and achievement in mathematics.
- Regular detailed discussion about the achievement of individuals and groups of students ensures that all students are helped to make good progress.
- The subject leader has established a strong, cohesive assessment system which is followed up with good intervention.
- Teachers have opportunities to plan together and observe each other. They frequently share resources and ideas, including in their subject

meetings. The role of the lead practitioner is helping teachers to develop their practice further.

- A sensible plan ensures that progress of sixth-form students is reviewed regularly. Currently, this monitoring lacks the frequency needed to identify and provide support for students who are not achieving as well as they should.
- The department's evaluation documents are generic and do not pinpoint mathematics-specific strengths and weaknesses in relation to teaching and the curriculum.
- The department's development plan does not have time lines nor does it identify baselines and targets which means that it is difficult for leaders to monitor progress and impact of agreed actions.

The curriculum in mathematics

- Informed by good quality assessment, teachers pitch their lessons at the right level. For example, academic demands of Year 7 students are high and build well on their Key Stage 2 learning.
- Students' knowledge in Key Stage 3 is consolidated by frequent assessment of a broad range of topics. This means that Key Stage 3 students in particular have a good understanding and recall of mathematical concepts and ideas. Teachers do not build in regular opportunities for problem solving and reasoning, and literacy in mathematics is not developed systematically enough.
- As an academy, West Hatch High does not have to follow the national curriculum but the department has planned time in the autumn term to ensure their curriculum builds on the national expectations.
- The curriculum is enhanced by an impressive intervention programme which is not just targeted at lower attaining students but at all students who need it, including higher attainers. The programme is based on a diagnosis of what students can and cannot do, is timely, and benefits from well-designed resources which reflect high expectations. Before embarking on the intervention programme, be it the three-week or the ten-week version, students undertake a pre-intervention assessment. At the end, they take another assessment which enables the intervention leader to feedback to the class teacher the progress students have made. Students are highly positive about the programme and articulate the difference it makes to their grades.

Teaching in mathematics

- Relationship between students and teachers are good and teachers' expectation of students is high. Students enjoy mathematics and feel supported. They know that teachers will identify gaps in their learning and ensure these are addressed.
- Assessment, and the use of this information in planning teaching, is a strong feature across the department. This means teaching meets the needs of students and builds on what they already know. However,

sometimes in lessons teachers do not give sufficient time to check all students have understood before moving on to the next activity.

- Half-termly assessments in each year group are analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' understanding. Students often reflect on their own learning and set themselves targets. Although students' work in books is mathematically accurate, their books can be messy which does not reflect the pride in their work they clearly have.

Achievement in mathematics

- Standards in mathematics are above average and have been so for the past three years. In 2014, the proportion of students achieving the top GCSE grades was average but current achievement data indicate this is set to rise.
- Students apply themselves in mathematics and have mature attitudes in selecting the level of difficulty of problems they want to solve. They challenge themselves in their learning.
- Standards attained by disadvantaged students show no gaps when compared to those of their peers in school or nationally. This is because students make good progress in their learning and work to close the gap was a school priority last year.
- Achievement in AS and A-level mathematics, in 2014, was below what was expected, given students' starting points. It is improving, due to more rigorous monitoring and setting clear expectations for sixth-form students, but is not yet as good as the progress students make in Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the curriculum enables regular opportunities for students to reason and solve mathematical problems
- making sure that teachers check all students have understood before moving on to the next activity in lessons
- raising the achievement of students in the sixth form.

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 and the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi
Her Majesty's Inspector