

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms N Arundell
Headteacher
Elsley Primary School
Tokyngton Avenue
Wembley
HA9 6HT

Dear Ms Arundell

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 31 January 2011 to look at work in science.

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; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- At the end of Year 6, in 2010, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 was below the national average. However, the school met its target for Level 5 attainment. Attainment in science has declined over the past three years.
- Attainment on entry to the school is very low. Pupils make good progress during their time in the school because of the emphasis on understanding the background, individual circumstances and requirements of each child. This is helped by effective work to involve parents and carers in supporting their children's learning.
- In lessons where expectations are high and activities demanding, progress is rapid. Progress is slower where science curriculum planning does not give clear guidance to teachers on expected performance at each level.

- Pupils welcome the opportunities they are given to make decisions, raise their own questions, be actively involved in planning investigations and use scientific vocabulary appropriately.
- In lessons, pupils behave well and have good attitudes towards their learning. When given the opportunity they are keen to participate and work well both independently and in groups. They particularly enjoy practical work.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have very low starting points in relation to their knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress and standards in this area are improving.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers plan their lessons to make them relevant to pupils' lives and interests and link to appropriate learning objectives. Teachers are careful to challenge and investigate misconceptions. In lessons, they use questioning skilfully to explore and develop pupils' understanding of scientific ideas as well as developing their vocabulary.
- Teachers listen to and observe pupils during lessons to gain an understanding of how learning is progressing so that they can reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning.
- Imaginative activities in lessons capture pupils' interest and stimulate their curiosity. Information and communication technology is used well by both teachers and pupils to support learning in science.
- Marking of pupils' work recognises success and gives guidance on how to improve. However, it does not always give enough information to pupils about the standard of their work and they are often unclear about the levels they have reached.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The whole school curriculum is currently under review as the school moves towards a thematic approach to the curriculum with a strong emphasis on skill development.
- Current long-term planning of the science curriculum ensures broad and balanced coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. Practical science is given appropriate priority, helping to promote pupils' engagement.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is developed appropriately around focused teaching and independent activities that allow children to explore and find out.
- The school recognises that the current science curriculum overall does not place sufficient emphasis on skill development or give enough description of expected performance at different levels. This makes it difficult for

individual science lessons to meet in full the differing and highly specific needs of all the pupils.

- The curriculum is well supported by an extensive range of activities including science weeks and visits from science professionals to lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The subject leader is working hard to raise the profile of science and is well supported by the senior leadership team. The subject leader understands the importance of developing teachers' skills and expertise in recognising the level at which pupils are working.
- The subject leader has not been able to observe science teaching directly although this is planned for the future. However, regular subject reviews, monitoring of pupils' work and science planning are very thorough and give a clear picture of strengths and areas for development.
- Pupils' progress is well monitored to give a good overview of achievement and allow their progress to be tracked as they move through the school.
- The subject leader has a good knowledge of current developments in science. There is a good local programme of training for supporting science subject leaders and sharing good practice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- giving clearer advice and guidance to pupils on how to improve the standard of their work
- improving the science curriculum to place greater emphasis on skill development and incorporate guidance on expected performance better to meet pupils' individual learning needs.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector