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Mr G Thompson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Thompson

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during our visit on 29 November 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.

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 all pupils reached the expected Level 4 in science. This was above both local and national averages. Fewer pupils than in previous years reached the higher Level 5 in science. In particular the percentage of girls reaching this higher level was below both local and national averages.
- In Year 2 all pupils reached the expected Level 2 and above. For the first time since 2007 some pupils reached the higher Level 3 in science. The number of pupils reaching this level was below the local average.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress in science. In lessons where expectations are high and activities demanding, progress improves. However progress is slow where work is pitched at too low a level for the ability of the pupils and standards are average.

- Pupils are not given enough opportunities 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 in science. When given the opportunity they are keen to participate and work well both independently and in groups.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory.

- Teachers plan to make their lessons relevant to pupils' lives and interests, linked to appropriate learning objectives.
- 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.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' abilities and what they can do are sometimes too low. As a result the lessons can be undemanding and the work the pupils are given too easy for them.
- The progress that pupils make in science is tracked through assessments based largely on written tests. Work is marked regularly but marking does not always give pupils enough feedback on the standard of their work and how it could be improved.
- Pupils rarely contribute to the assessment of their own science work or that of others in a way that helps them to understand the standard of their work.
- Scientific enquiry is integrated into the content areas of science, but tracking and evaluation of pupils' progress in this area of science is limited.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- Long-term planning of the curriculum ensures coverage of National Curriculum requirements and a broad and balanced coverage of science content. Scientific enquiry is not clearly identified in the planning, and progress in skill development in this area is not tracked systematically.
- Science curriculum planning promotes a programme of activities that ensures that pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning.
- Science practical work is given appropriate priority and helps to engage pupils with their science work.
- However, investigative activities do not give pupils enough opportunities to make their own key decisions or test out their scientific knowledge and understanding.

- Provision is good for extra-curricular and enrichment activities and the school organises a popular science club. At the moment the school is working with Sussex University to act as the science hub for STEM activities for more able pupils.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in science is satisfactory.

- You and the new science coordinator have a clear vision for science in the school and have suitable plans for improving science provision including the quality of teaching.
- The science coordinator is working hard to raise the profile of science and understands the importance of developing teachers' skills and expertise in this area although there are limited subject-specific professional development opportunities available.
- You are putting into place effective monitoring and reviewing of the quality of science education and are developing the coordinator's role in this.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the feedback given to pupils so that they know how to improve the standards and quality of their science work
- raising the standards reached by more able pupils and by girls.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector