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28 January 2011

Mr Andrew Craven
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Craven

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 18 November 2010 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 good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and have been maintained at this level or above for several years. Each year, well over a half of pupils achieve Level 5. Standards are also above average at the end of Key Stage 1, where, in 2010, all pupils were assessed as reaching the national expectation for 7 year-olds and over 40% were assessed at Level 3.
- All pupils make good progress, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in receipt of free school meals.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning in science. They enjoy their lessons, especially hands-on investigations.

- Science contributes positively to pupils' personal development. For example, they learn to cooperate and develop independence during their practical work.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- The teaching observed was underpinned by teaching skills of high quality. Relationships between teachers and pupils were very good. Lessons had clear learning objectives and success criteria. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond well to these, producing work with high standard of presentation. Teachers' use of scientific language was particularly clear and precise.
- Resources are plentiful and of good quality. Every lesson observed made good use of information communication technology.
- The school is introducing Assessing Pupils' Progress in science this year. Currently, pupils, including older ones who may gain most, are unaware of what is required to reach the higher skill levels of science investigation.
- Planning is of good quality. Lessons observed provided pupils with work of a varied and interesting nature that was well differentiated for groups of pupils of different abilities. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work showed a formal, rigid structure to recording investigations that de-motivated some pupils, particularly the older ones.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The curriculum is undergoing change in order to emphasise the skills of science more. This is fully in keeping with the development of assessment arrangements intended to measure the acquisition of such skills.
- Lessons are increasingly planned to involve more than just science. For example, in a particularly successful introduction to a lesson on adaptation of animals to their environments, one of Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* was used, creatively linking science with children's literature.
- The school arranges a rich and exciting programme of visits and enrichment activities that are often related to science. Care is taken to ensure that the science curriculum is related to the local environment through studies of the sea, of rivers and of farming. The school is working towards awards that recognise its work to ensure pupils are sensitive to the environment.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and well supported by senior leaders, including those responsible for assessment and for curriculum development.
- Teachers' planning and pupils' work are regularly monitored and there is rigorous evaluation of performance to track the progress of pupils.
- There are good links with local secondary schools for science and sound arrangements to call on additional advice and support from the local authority's contracted curriculum support team.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring older pupils understand their next steps in developing investigative skills in science
- exploring and developing different ways in which pupils plan, record and evaluate their investigations.

I hope 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

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector