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7 October 2010

Mr K Telfer
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Telfer

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 7 October 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 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- The school provides education for a wide range of needs and all full-time pupils have statements of special educational need. Staff respond to the diversity of pupils well and plan effectively to stimulate pupils and to engage them in activities.
- Pupils' attainment is carefully monitored and comparisons made with other schools including statistically similar schools nationally. While attainment overall is low, performance data indicates overall good progress and achievement but for some students progress is outstanding.
- The staff in the school are skilled at making the science work accessible to pupils. They involve pupils well and encourage them to take decisions and take active part in lessons.

- Pupils apply themselves well, are happy to be actively involved and show enjoyment of the science work. They are willing to have a go at activities and at answering teachers' questions.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers are skilled at engaging pupils. There is clearly a belief that pupils should be as active as possible and inactivity is challenged appropriately.
- Teachers' planning is of high quality. It is modified in response to good evaluation of the progress individuals are making.
- Formative assessment is carried out in line with the school's marking policy and teachers write constructive comments in pupils' books. Teachers give good oral feedback to pupils to help them to improve.
- The relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. There are clearly high levels of trust by pupils and teachers show great care and respect for pupils.
- In constructing its assessment strategy the school is using agreed measures of performance and materials that allow the progress of pupils in science to be evaluated.
- ICT is used in a range of ways to promote effective learning. This involves not only educational programmes on computers that pupils use but also the skilled use of interactive whiteboard technology by teachers.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- There is a good detailed scheme of work throughout the school. This has been recently reviewed to ensure the coverage of the National Curriculum in science.
- The curriculum has a model that is based on a six unit rolling programme of themes which are well matched to the needs of the mixed age classes and mixed learning needs of pupils.
- Great effort has gone into making these themes and the work involved relevant and challenging for pupils. The ideas and themes involved provide engaging contexts for pupils' work.
- The resulting curriculum gives a broad and balanced experience of science with no area left out. Scientific enquiry is a significant component of all the work, helping with pupils' skill development and securing their science knowledge and understanding.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visitors to the school and visits by pupils to sites outside school. The visits are purposeful and

designed to help pupils in their scientific, educational and social development.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- You and the science coordinator have succeeded in creating a clear vision of effective science education in the school.
- The model of collaborative planning has been effective in sharing ideas and practice and developing a common understanding.
- The assiduous assessment and monitoring of science provides the clear basis for good target setting and the modification of planning.
- Teachers have generic continuing professional development but have not had recent and relevant science training from external sources. The coordinator does provide some in-house training.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- consolidating the science curriculum and ensuring effective monitoring is used to evaluate its impact on pupils' achievement.

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

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector