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Miss G Marsland
Headteacher
Oughtrington Primary School
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Dear Miss Marsland

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit with David Brown on 6 December 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.

- Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 show that standards are well above average. Above average proportions of pupils attain both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5.
- In the lessons observed, pupils consistently made good progress as a result of good teaching.
- Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils are positive about their science lessons, and their good attitudes make a strong contribution to their achievement.

- Work in books is well presented and is of above average standard. However, the volume of written work in some books is fairly limited.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and good relationships with their pupils. They are encouraging and enthusiastic.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to do practical and investigative work, including opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations.
- Teachers' exposition and explanations are clear.
- Lessons include a good emphasis on using scientific vocabulary and terminology, with suitable opportunities for pupils to use these in discussions.
- Teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards and appropriate science software.
- Group activities provide opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in teams but sometimes groups are too large for all to participate effectively.
- Although some activities are differentiated to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, the work is not always challenging enough for more able pupils.
- The marking of pupils' work often includes helpful pointers to the next steps that pupils need to take.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning experiences which they enjoy and find interesting. Older pupils were positive about the change to a themed curricular approach.
- Science investigations are set in relevant contexts and encourage pupils to consider their own questions and how they might be answered.
- The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure that there is full coverage of the National Curriculum.
- The school provides some good enrichment opportunities relevant to science including trips, visits, speakers and clubs.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- Day-to-day operational management is effective.
- There is a clear and systematic schedule for monitoring teachers' planning, carrying out book scrutinies and learning walks.
- Pupils reported that for some topics and investigations equipment is limited and needed to be shared between groups.
- Recent professional development activities have focused on curricular developments and assessment strategies. There is little science-specific professional development and few opportunities for networking with other schools.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more challenging work in lessons for more able pupils, to raise their achievement even further
- ensuring that professional development opportunities in science are offered to the coordinator and class teachers
- ensuring that the range and quantity of equipment and resources available to all classes for practical and investigative work are adequate, and that group sizes are small enough to allow all pupils to participate effectively.

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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector