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Mrs G Brittain
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brittain

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 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 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.

- National tests and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 show that standards are well above average. Above average proportions of pupils attain the higher level 5.
- In the lessons observed, pupils made good progress consistently as a result of good teaching.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning which contribute to their good achievement. They talk confidently and articulately about their science work and are very keen to do well. They collaborate well in group activities.

- Work in books is of above average standard. Pupils take pride in their work which is presented very neatly.
- Pupils' practical and experimental skills are developed very well. They take great care to do precisely as instructed. Pupils have a good understanding of scientific vocabulary.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- In the lessons observed, teaching was consistently good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good relationships with their pupils. They are encouraging and enthusiastic.
- There are high levels of trust and respect in classrooms and around the school. The environment for learning is positive.
- Teachers' exposition and explanations are clear. There is a good emphasis on using scientific vocabulary.
- Some effective directed questioning was observed. Teachers also make good use of talk partners which ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to share their ideas.
- Some effective use of ICT was observed, particularly the use of electronic whiteboards.
- Lessons are planned well but often teacher led and directed. Some examples of differentiated activities were observed. Very good use is made of practical and experimental work, but there are few opportunities for pupils to plan their own research and investigations.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning in science and clearly enjoy their lessons. However, few knew the levels they were aiming for or their progress towards these.
- Work in books is marked regularly. Although there are a few comments explaining how pupils might improve their work, this is not consistent.
- Pupils with physical disabilities are supported very well in lessons by teaching assistants who ensure that they are fully included in all activities.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure that there is coordinated approach for all parallel classes. The planning matrix shows how full coverage of the national curriculum is achieved.
- There are some particularly good enrichment opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, including local high school events and lessons delivered by local sixth form college students.

- The Year 6 residential experience provides a very valuable opportunity for pupils to undertake field work comparing coastal and woodland habitats and the resulting work is of a high standard.
- Extra-curricular activities associated with science include a gardening club and a visit from a theatre group.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- You, together with the deputy headteacher as science coordinator, undertake thorough scrutinies of teachers' planning and all pupils' science books. These ensure a consistent and coherent approach between parallel classes and across the school. However, there is no systematic observation of science lessons.
- Good use is made of local adviser expertise and the local science coordinators network to ensure that the coordinator is up to date.
- Most professional development in science for class teachers is done within the school through termly staff meetings. There is little external training for class teachers.
- In the past, some analysis of pupils' answers to test questions has been carried out to identify particular areas of weakness.
- Science resources are very good and teachers make good use of them.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more opportunities for independent work, especially investigative work, to develop further the skills of scientific enquiry
- refining assessment strategies to ensure that pupils' progress towards challenging individual targets is monitored, and even more pupils reach higher levels.

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