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Mrs N Flower  
Headteacher  
The Gerrards Cross CofE School  
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Buckinghamshire  
SL9 8BD

Dear Mrs Flower

### **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 9 December 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is outstanding.

#### **Achievement in science**

Achievement in science is outstanding.

- Children start school with skills which are above those expected for their age particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with their knowledge and understanding of the world well above expected levels.
- Attainment in science at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is well above the national average. For the past three years all Year 6 pupils have attained the expected Level 4 and nearly twice the national average percentage of pupils have attained the higher Level 5.

- All groups of pupils including boys and girls and those from different minority ethnic groups make similar progress.
- Pupils demonstrate a real enjoyment and enthusiasm for science. They talk extremely positively about the range of practicals and investigations that they have carried out and how these have helped them to learn about science.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are curious, eager to learn and ask interesting questions. They work extremely well individually, or in pairs or in groups.

### **Quality of teaching in science**

The quality of teaching in science is outstanding.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they deliver interesting lessons with energy and enthusiasm making sure that no learning time is lost.
- Teachers make excellent use of their knowledge of pupils' prior learning to plan and deliver lessons that cater very well for the full ability of pupils in their class.
- The progress of pupils' learning in lessons is checked through extremely effective questioning. Teachers alter the pace of their teaching so that it carefully matches the pace of pupils' learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in lessons are excellent. Pupils are praised and encouraged by staff and this raises their confidence, self-esteem and enjoyment of science.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well in lessons and they provide pupils with very effective support.
- The marking of pupils' work is regular and gives them clear, helpful advice about how to improve their learning in science.

### **Quality of the curriculum in science**

The quality of the curriculum in science is outstanding.

- The whole school curriculum is based around imaginative half-termly topics. Science content and skills are integrated very effectively into these topics so that they are delivered through contexts that are interesting and relevant to pupils.
- The school's topic-based approach to learning ensures that strong links are made between science and other subjects such as design technology, information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers adapt medium-term plans creatively so that the lessons they deliver capture the imagination and interest of the pupils in their class.
- The science curriculum is enhanced very well by activities such as science weeks, science and gardening clubs and a broad range of science related

outings and visits. These provide pupils with interesting and memorable experiences that promote both their enjoyment and learning of science.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in science**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is outstanding.

- A culture of high expectations of achievement and personal development pervades the school and is clearly evident in the leadership and management of science.
- Science leaders are very well informed and have established a clear vision for science that is based on developing children's sense of curiosity and enquiry about the world around them.
- Science leaders monitor and evaluate science provision very well and they have a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths in science and the areas in need of further development. A very good plan is in place to drive improvement.
- Pupils' developing knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts are assessed well using end of topic tests. However, science leaders are sensibly developing additional teacher assessment strategies with a greater focus on the assessment of pupils' skills in scientific enquiry.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- continuing to develop teacher assessment strategies that have a greater focus on the assessment of pupils' skills in scientific enquiry.

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

**Peter Sanderson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**