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Mrs M Curley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Curley

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 March 2011 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: an interview with you and the chair of governors; discussions with teachers; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Attainment in science at the end of each key stage is broadly in line with national averages. Many pupils achieve the national expectation in science at 11 years of age, although fewer than average attain the higher Level 5.
- Most children enter the school with levels of knowledge and understanding that are below those of most children of their age. Pupils make at least satisfactory overall progress in learning science.
- Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities enjoy science. Behaviour in lessons is very good and pupils are keen to undertake investigations. They cooperate well in groups. This makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory, overall.

- The lessons observed had clear strengths. They were all of a practical nature involving pupils in hands-on investigation and enquiry.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is not consistently effective. It does not always make clear to pupils what science skills have been learnt or challenge them to improve their work further.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' investigations are often recorded in a formulaic manner that leaves them with little scope to explain their understanding of science in a variety of ways. However, the coordinator is currently developing alternative ways of recording learning and this is a positive development.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in science.
- Teachers base the curriculum for each year on the units of work published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. These do not necessarily relate to pupils' interests or have particular significance for the school in its community. The units are not often linked to the work pupils undertake in other subjects of the curriculum, so they are not able to see easily how science is relevant to other subjects.
- Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage successfully link children's emerging science knowledge and understanding of the world with children's interests. The project on superheroes, introducing waterproofing and magnetism, demonstrated this well.
- The school provides a good range of enrichment activities that promotes learning and sustainable development, including regular visits to a museum of science and industry and running a Green Council.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management in science are satisfactory.

- Science has not been an area for development in recent years.
- Teaching does not benefit from the systematic monitoring of lessons and pupils' progress is not routinely tracked. Teaching staff have had no professional training for several years.
- The subject coordinator has a science background. He has received up-to-date training in a regional science learning centre and has many good ideas for improvements, some of which are being implemented. Overall, the capacity to improve provision is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the curriculum to make it more relevant to pupils and to link better with other subjects
- improving the marking of pupils' work to indicate what skills have been learnt and what is needed to improve
- tracking pupils' progress to identify which pupils and groups may be falling behind or making accelerated progress, so as to better meet their learning needs.

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

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector