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Mr A Cocker
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cocker

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 May 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: 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.

- Attainment is above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. An above average proportion of pupils attain the higher levels at Years 2 and 6, indicating that pupils who are able fulfil their potential.
- Children's early understanding develops well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Last year, each child was judged to reach scale point 6 or above on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile in Knowledge and Understanding of the World. This is a much higher proportion than normally achieved by children of this age.
- Children and pupils are enthusiastic about science. Girls are just as keen as boys, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included. Behaviour in lessons was excellent.
- Pupils enjoy doing investigations most. However, they enjoy all lessons because they say teachers make them fun. Lessons promote pupils'

personal development effectively because they make significant demands on their skills of cooperation and teamwork. Older pupils also enjoy the more technical aspects of recording science, in graphs and charts, for example.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- All lessons observed were of good or better quality. There were many strong features. There was a high degree of consistency in the quality of planning, the degree of preparation, the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards and the good use of support staff. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils, much praised in the school's section 5 inspection, were much in evidence. The most effective teaching was characterised by excellent open questioning that left the onus on pupils to provide hypotheses and to solve problems for themselves.
- The assessment of pupils' learning and teachers' use of this information to set targets for pupils in both skills and knowledge are good. However, the marking of pupils' workbooks, although sound, rarely guides pupils to their next steps in learning.
- Lessons are highly structured by teachers. They provide pupils with very clear guidance of what is required of them, such as when planning investigations and making them fair tests. This ensures that lessons are purposeful and experiments often successfully demonstrate the desired outcome. However, this approach does not fully promote the pupils' skills of planning and carrying out investigations for themselves, particularly of evaluating experiments when outcomes are not what are expected, one of the realities for practising scientists.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The science curriculum is firmly based on the guidelines issued by the former Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and those for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching and assessment materials are sourced from a wide range of commercially available schemes and programmes, from which teachers have built up a good range of interesting lessons.
- To support learning in lessons, the school arranges regular out-of-school visits with a science focus. In addition, some extra-curricular activities, such as the gardening club, have a particular bias towards science. Teachers frequently provide homework research projects, so that parents are also involved as partners in learning. Other subjects, such as drama in English, are sometimes combined with science to help the development and understanding of science concepts.
- The school has not, as yet, considered how the curriculum could be developed to better reflect the distinctive aspects of the scientific heritage of the community. Also, it has not considered how pupils might be

introduced to the pressing issues for sustainability, for example, that will face them in their adult lives and challenge scientists of the future.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- Science is based on a policy of excellent quality. It makes very clear to staff what the school regards as important and promotes skills and questioning very strongly.
- The subject coordinator has developed a rigorous and successful approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, teachers' planning, their use of assessment and target-setting. All are managed very well. The notable exception that has not benefited from the coordinator's scrutiny is the quality of marking in pupils' workbooks, which is no better than satisfactory.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- moving science from good to outstanding by giving pupils more say in the planning, execution and evaluation of investigations and freeing up time during the school day/week to allow for extended work in science
- developing the curriculum further to better reflect the locality's scientific heritage and also prepare pupils for the scientific challenges of the future
- improving marking by ensuring pupils know their next steps in learning.

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