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Miss A R Farrington  
Headteacher  
Rufford CofE School  
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Dear Miss Farrington

### **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 27 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

### **Achievement in science**

Achievement in science is good.

- From broadly average starting points, pupils make good progress reaching above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning which contribute to their good achievement.
- Pupils clearly enjoy lessons and are keen to do well. They apply themselves to the tasks they are set, diligently and conscientiously. In group activities, they work well together.
- Pupils take a pride in their work which is well presented. In one lesson observed, Year 6 pupils planning an investigation showed a good understanding of the principles of fair testing.

## **Quality of teaching in science**

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and good relationships with their pupils. The climate for learning is good and is characterised by an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Lessons are well planned and have a clear focus to ensure that pupils are active, participating and engaged. Teachers make lessons enjoyable and provide a range of learning activities which is well contextualised. Some effective directed questioning was observed and teachers' exposition and explanations were clear.
- There are some good opportunities for collaborative group work. The pace of learning in lessons is steady and could be more rapid, particularly for more able pupils.
- Discussion with pupils confirmed that information and communication technology (ICT) plays an important part in their learning although its use was only limited in the lessons observed.
- Pupils' work is regularly, formally assessed and most pupils know the levels at which they are working. However, some pupils are less clear about the levels they are aiming towards. There was little use of self- or peer-assessment in the lessons observed.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly. Teachers' comments are helpful and typically include both praise and questions or suggestions to prompt improvement. A particularly good feature is that there is clear evidence of these being followed up by pupils.

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

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that there is full coverage of the National Curriculum as pupils move through the school in mixed-age classes.
- The school has moved away from a theoretical knowledge-based approach to focus more on practical and investigative work. This is a positive move which is increasing pupils' enjoyment.
- There are some good enrichment opportunities including trips and visits and a 'mad science' club. Good use is made of the school's environmental garden which includes a wildlife pond.

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

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

- Monitoring of provision is thorough and includes lesson observations, and planning and work scrutiny.

- Regular review of the curriculum ensures that it meets pupils' needs well. Such reviews have led to changes that have improved provision, including the drawing-up of explicit learning outcomes for pupils of different ages and abilities in mixed-age classes studying the same topic.
- Appropriately challenging targets are set. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and tracked using an electronic system. Termly assessments are followed up in discussions with class teachers focusing on the progress of each individual pupil. This helps to ensure that any underachievement is identified and acted upon.
- Most professional development for class teachers is done within the school through staff meetings. The formation of a local cluster of primary schools provides an appropriate network for sharing expertise.

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

- increasing the level of challenge for more able pupils in lessons
- developing more opportunities for independent work, including planning investigations, to further develop pupils' skills of scientific enquiry
- making more use of self- and peer-assessment in lessons to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own 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

**Ruth James**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**