

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



22 June 2011

Mrs P Scott
Headteacher
Loxdale Primary School
Chapel Street
Bilston
West Midlands
WV14 0PH

Dear Mrs Scott

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of Mrs Wright-Jones, acting headteacher, your staff and pupils, during my visit on 13 June 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; scrutiny of relevant documentation; informal discussions with pupils; an analysis of their work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good with outstanding features.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- From levels of knowledge and understanding that are below those of most children of their age on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils go on to reach at least average levels of attainment in science by the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment has improved significantly over recent years and the overwhelming majority of pupils make at least two full National Curriculum levels of progress during Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 has also improved year-on-year and now stands at about a third of each cohort.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons. They enjoy science, particularly investigations. The quality of work in their workbooks is of a high standard and they have a good knowledge of their targets. Behaviour in science lessons is excellent.

- Science makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. In each lesson observed, they worked cooperatively with other pupils to solve problems and to reach conclusions.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- All lessons observed were of at least good quality and some outstanding teaching was seen.
- Strong generic teaching skills were in evidence. In all lessons, relationships between staff and pupils were good; staff were positive and encouraging. Excellent use was made of support staff.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, very good use is made of the outdoors in all weathers to promote children's knowledge and understanding. For example, during the visit, very good use was made of the wooded area as a source of insects during a hunt for mini-beasts.
- In the main school, teachers plan carefully to provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils at different stages of knowledge and understanding. Resources, including the use of information and communication technology, are of good quality. Very good attention is paid to pupils' health and safety during investigations. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is exemplary, consistently making clear what has been learnt and what might be done to improve.
- There were few weaknesses in the teaching observed. Overall, however, rather too much time was spent in getting pupils to think about their investigations before their start, particularly what might make the investigations 'fair'. By contrast, in an outstanding lesson, pupils were immediately engaged in selecting apparatus and setting up their experiments. Only later were they asked to evaluate what had gone well. This approach of putting practical work first and thinking about what they had learnt after was more appropriate to the pupils' level of development and understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- Traditionally, the curriculum has been based on the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's guidance. This has ensured breadth and balance.
- More recently, the school has introduced an approach where pupils have a greater say in aspects they wish to study, with better cross-curricular links. This is promoting a keener sense of relevance. Within science, the school has a particular strength in the teaching and learning about living things. This is of some importance as many pupils live in an urban environment where access to green spaces is limited.
- The school's enrichment of the science curriculum is outstanding. The staff support a wide range of after-school clubs that bears directly on science, such as those for cooking (healthy eating), gardening (year-round) and an

occasional science club. Moreover, the school's leadership has shown real enterprise by forging a partnership with a major building firm during the construction of a large, neighbourhood leisure centre. This partnership is promoting excellent opportunities for pupils to study science and technology in a highly relevant, local context.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is outstanding.

- You and the acting headteacher provide excellent direction and oversight for improvement and monitoring in science. Several of the innovations introduced, such as the creation of the cooking room, the emphasis on growing fruit and vegetables and the development of a more relevant curriculum, impact very positively on science.
- The school's involvement of parents and the community is helping achievement. Parents and carers join their children during starter days, when new topics are introduced. More pupils are researching their science topics at home. A significant number of parents and carers are gaining qualifications as teaching assistants. Their support in science lessons is helping pupils access more individual support.
- Subject leadership is innovative and successful. Leadership is distributed and very effective. The cross-phase aspect team responsible for science is ambitious in raising standards and quality in science. Phase leaders are constructively self-critical and use advanced techniques, such as video analyses, to seek improvements in teaching and learning. Pupils' progress is tracked and evaluated exceptionally well.
- The school makes good use of expertise in science from within the local authority.

An area for improvement, which we discussed, is:

- building on the good practice in the school and the pupils' natural enthusiasm to experiment and ensuring that pupils are actively engaged in investigations earlier by spending less time on planning investigations on paper.

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