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Mrs J Holdcroft  
Headteacher  
Burghclere Primary School  
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Berkshire  
RG20 9HT

Dear Mrs Holdcroft

### **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 23 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 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.

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Due to the small size of year groups, childrens' level of knowledge and understanding of the world around them varies from year to year. However, it is in line with that expected for their age by the time they leave the Reception class.
- All pupils have attained at least Level 4 in science for the past two years. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 has also been above the national average.
- Pupils made good progress in all the lessons observed and this reflects the good progress that they make over their time at the school.
- All groups of pupils make similar progress.

- Pupils enjoy science, are keen to do well and display excellent attitudes to learning. Behaviour was good or better in all the lessons observed.

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

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about teaching science.
- Teaching is characterised by first-hand investigations, where the focus is on developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry.
- Pupils' work in their books is of good quality and demonstrates how the curriculum in science is taught in themes, linked with other subjects.
- Pupils' skills of scientific enquiry are being developed well across the school by the consistent use of investigative planning sheets that are used in all classes.
- Pupils value the good relationships they have with their teachers and find them, helpful and supportive.
- Learning support assistants are effectively deployed to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- In most lessons, teachers use pupils' prior attainment information well to pitch activities at the full ability range of pupils in the class. However, this is not consistently the case and some lessons lack sufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils.
- The marking of pupils' work is regular and generally helpful. However, pupils do not currently have individual targets for improvement in science; good plans are in place to address this issue from September 2011.

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

The quality of the curriculum in science is outstanding.

- The curriculum has been skilfully and creatively planned to ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding of science are developed through topics which make interesting and meaningful links with other subjects.
- The curriculum has a clear focus on developing pupils' sense of curiosity and their skills of scientific enquiry.
- Pupils' interest and experience of science is significantly enriched by a range of activities outside the normal run of science lessons. For example, there is a gardening club, a science club and the school has recently attained an Eco-Schools Green Flag award; it is also involved in local primary science challenge activities. A number of visitors to the school and trips also enhance pupils' enjoyment of science.
- Opportunities to use information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in science are effectively built into the curriculum. However, opportunities to use data-logging equipment are more limited.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- There is a culture of high expectation in the school with all staff wanting all pupils to achieve highly in science.
- Senior staff provide clear direction and strong leadership for the subject. They have an accurate knowledge of the school's performance in science and a good understanding of current strengths and weaknesses. They have clear plans to further improve standards and quality in science.
- The subject coordinator is well informed of recent initiatives in science education and has effectively ensured that scientific enquiry is at the heart of the school's work.
- Monitoring, evaluation and tracking are all in place. The assessment of pupils' attainment is secure although a more frequent and fine judgement of pupils' attainment would allow faster identification of any pupils who are making less than expected progress.

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

- ensuring that all lessons provide higher attaining pupils with a suitable level of challenge
- ensuring that pupils have clear, helpful targets for improvement to further enhance their progress in developing their skills of scientific enquiry.

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

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