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Mrs C Wilson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wilson

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 29 October 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, governors and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of all three classes at the school.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Pupils who join the school in Reception are working slightly below age-related expectations. They make quick progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, then continue to make good progress through Key Stage 2 to achieve broadly average attainment in science by Year 6.
- All pupils for whom prior attainment data are available make at least the expected progress, with most making more than this when considering sublevels of progress. Very strong progress for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities was evident in 2011.
- Pupils enjoy science lessons, particularly practical investigations, where they participate enthusiastically, and considerately.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers plan lessons effectively to involve all pupils in a wide range of activities, including practical studies, despite the challenges presented by mixed-age classes. Pupils are grouped effectively so that they work well collaboratively.
- Day-to-day marking is accurate, providing pupils with personalised advice on how the work might be improved, although pupils do not always follow up that advice.
- The conversations between teacher and pupils, of all ages, are dynamic and friendly, instilling a positive classroom climate where pupils are free to ask their own questions. In one good example, pupils devised a quick additional experiment to test the waterproof nature of various containers as part of an investigation into the suitability of different materials for particular tasks.
- All classrooms, and most of the corridors, contain excellent displays of pupils' work and informative teacher-devised information about science and the world in which we live. This gives a positive affirmation of the importance of science to pupils' future lives and well-being.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- Medium- and long-term work schemes set out to cover the National Curriculum, through a two-year cycle of topics in the three mixed-age classes.
- A very strong feature is the wealth of trips and visits undertaken by all ages, to local and more distant sites of scientific and technological interest as well as museums. These are complemented by the large number of parents including governors, who bring their scientific experience and enthusiasm to bear and help make trips possible by facilitating transport arrangements.
- Good and developing links with the local secondary school, a Technology College, bring subject expertise to the school, and also help in securing good information exchange as pupils transfer to their next school.
- Work scrutiny revealed some shortfalls in the coverage of science for the Year 5/6 class, in part linked to some staff turbulence last year. The two-year cycle does not build in opportunities for Year 6 pupils to revisit, at a higher level, work they did early in Year 5; this used to occur in preparation for science tests, but these are no longer required.
- The Year 3/4 class were provided with ample opportunities to write about science independently, and give extended responses to questions raised in the lessons. A similar level of high-quality science report writing is evident in Year 5/6.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- Outcomes for pupils are good, as are the quality of day-to-day teaching and learning, as the school monitors this aspect of provision well. School leaders have increased the frequency of summative assessment in science to six times a year alongside English and mathematics.
- Good partnerships with local primary schools and the main secondary school in the local pyramid are helping to exchange ideas, share resources including subject expertise from the secondary, and assessment expertise from the primary schools. These have the potential to substantially improve transition from primary to secondary school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making sure that pupils act on the good diagnostic feedback that they receive from marking, by providing time for them to individually respond either in writing, or verbally
- ensuring that pupils complete the schemes of work over time, and have opportunities to revisit topics that were taught early in the two-year cycle.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector