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Mr T Brenchley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brenchley

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 September 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with the national average.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress relative to their starting points. While individual cohorts show considerable variation, the school has not identified any significant difference in the performance of different groups of pupils over time.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning and the large majority are very willing to produce their best work when set challenges and scientific questions to investigate. Pupils are also keen to raise their own questions to develop their understanding, for example, when beginning a new topic.

- Pupils achieve well during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage because provision for them to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world is good and children's learning is well supported.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and generally plan an appropriate range of activities that supports the intended learning and promotes pupils' enjoyment of science effectively.
- Teachers use information and communication technology to introduce new ideas or knowledge which helps to engage pupils in their learning.
- Lessons observed often did not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils resulting in satisfactory, rather than good, pupil progress.
- Teachers assess pupils' attainment against levelled National Curriculum statements creating a useful 'picture' of the knowledge, understanding and skills for each pupil. This is shared with the pupil's new class teacher at the start of each year helping to support progression.
- Marking praises pupils' work but the use of targets and written feedback to help pupils know how to improve is at an early stage of development.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The thematic approach to the curriculum, linking science with different subject areas, has contributed to pupils' increased enjoyment of the subject but has not secured an improvement in their attainment.
- Increased opportunities for teachers to plan together have successfully promoted a more creative and engaging curriculum experience for pupils.
- The curriculum is adjusted effectively to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils but an appropriate degree of challenge for middle and higher attaining pupils is less evident.
- Activities linked to the school's Eco-award have enhanced the curriculum and promoted pupils' understanding of sustainability issues well.
- Good use is made of outdoor learning opportunities in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and the main school to enrich pupils' learning experiences.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is satisfactory.

- The subject leader has led curriculum development within the school effectively ensuring that pupils receive a broad, balanced and enjoyable science experience.

- The subject leader monitors pupils' attainment carefully but systems and individual pupil targets are not being used smartly to ensure that all pupils are on track to make good progress relative to their starting points.
- The quality of provision has not been monitored although plans are in place for a review of the subject later in the term.
- The skills and expertise of both the subject leader and a newly qualified teacher have been developed through their involvement in training opportunities provided by the National Science Learning Centre.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment and accelerating pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that all lessons provide a good degree of challenge for all pupils
 - using the findings of your monitoring and evaluation of provision to identify areas for improvement and take effective action to increase the proportion of good or better teaching
 - developing systems to check that pupils are on track to make good progress relative to their starting points and identify potential underperformance
 - providing pupils with more detailed feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector