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Mrs A Burbidge
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Burbidge

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff, governors and pupils, during my visit on 27 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, governors 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.

- Attainment in science has risen since the school was inspected in 2009, and is now above average when pupils complete Year 6. Good progress, by all pupils, is evident in all classes.
- Pupils enjoy science lessons, and also the many additional opportunities to study science-related topics through projects, trips and visits. They all work hard in lessons, covering a considerable amount of ground, with high-quality written reports of the numerous scientific investigations they conduct.
- Boys achieve well, and as well as girls, as do pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils work very well together, cooperating in group work from an early age, leading to effective

collaboration by older pupils conducting complicated tests with numerous variables to control.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- The most important characteristic of the best lessons seen, and the work in pupils' books, was the high level of science learning demanded by teachers, and the corresponding good response by pupils. Practical investigations are occurring weekly from Key Stage 1, resulting in extensive opportunities for pupils to become proficient in the skills of planning and carrying out fair tests, and in clearly reporting their findings.
- Pupils start learning about science in the world around them from a very early age; for example, pupils on their second day in Reception were trying to find out how to get a model polar bear out from a large block of ice. In doing so, some discovered for the first time that magnifying glasses 'make it bigger', and were quite thrilled by that experience. Just as enthusiastic were Year 6 pupils systematically investigating the rate of falling of model 'helicopter' seeds.
- Teachers mark and correct pupils' work accurately, and give good advice on how the work may be improved. One or two factual inaccuracies in the work and presentations of some pupils are understandable given the high academic demand made of pupils by committed teachers who allow pupils to explore their inquisitiveness beyond the National Curriculum.
- Medium-term assessment allows teachers and pupils to chart progress over time, and revisit aspects that individual pupils have not yet mastered.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good in almost all respects, with additional expertise provided by a teaching assistant who has science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) qualifications.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is outstanding.

- The school has focused on improving science, over the last two years and this shows in the effective curriculum that ensures that pupils across all years have enough time to actually do science in a practical way.
- Science and technology feature strongly in display work throughout the school, giving a high profile to these aspects and ensuring that pupils' successful science work is celebrated.
- Additional opportunities to enrich science and technology learning arise through teachers, teaching assistants and governors, who bring a rich range of different experiences in STEM subjects into the school.
- Good oversight by governors and their clear eco-friendly strategy adds to the richness of the school's science learning environment, for example, the school uses electrical energy from its large bank of solar panels and is

in the process of supplying excess energy to the grid and has an extensive programme of tree conservation and planting.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- School leaders have successfully improved pupils' attainment in science, through improvements to the curriculum, increased focus on additional science-related activities, and good monitoring of pupils' progress. You have tackled a legacy of budget deficit effectively, giving some scope to develop teaching resources for science in the future.
- The recently appointed science coordinator brings her experience and professional development from her previous school. She has further reinforced the importance of good-quality science investigations.
- Teachers across the school are confident in teaching science, know where to get support if necessary, and are able to adapt lessons as they proceed as practical work throws up unexpected events. However, on a few occasions some limitations to practical experimental resources currently hamper the scope for further investigations.
- Good links with the local upper schools and colleges together with in-house teaching assistant expertise allow pupils to experience advanced applications of science and engineering, for example through the 'F1 project' involving three-dimensional modelling and virtual wind-tunnels.
- Collaboration with local primary schools allows pooled resources for teacher training, and shared moderation of teacher assessments.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- keeping the resources available for the support of science teaching under review, to ensure that teachers can quickly and reliably extend pupils' learning as they raise questions
- continuing to develop professional links with secondary schools, to ensure that subject expertise is available to help teachers support of pupils' genuine thirst for even more science knowledge.

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