

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs C Allison
Headteacher
Swinford Church of England Primary School
School Lane
Swinford
Lutterworth
LE17 6BG

Dear Mrs Allison

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 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 you and the subject leader; scrutiny of relevant documentation and pupils' work; discussions with pupils in Year 6; and observations of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Standards in science are improving, year-on-year, at each key stage. Typically, all pupils reach the nationally expected levels at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and a high proportion of children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with good levels of knowledge and understanding of the world. In 2011, about half of Year 6 pupils attained the higher Level 5 in science. Overall, pupils make good progress in science.
- Very few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are from minority ethnic backgrounds, or come from socially and economically disadvantaged families. Consequently, the school monitors the progress of these pupils as discrete individuals rather than groups. Monitoring records for gender differences in performance suggest boys and girls make similar

progress. Lesson observations suggest that girls make as full a contribution as that of boys in lessons.

- Pupils enjoy science, especially doing investigations. All pupils are taught in classes with pupils of different ages. In science investigations and in group discussions, pupils cooperate well together, sharing ideas and tasks. Consequently, science lessons contribute to pupils' social and personal development.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- The quality of teaching in all the lessons observed was good. Activities were well planned, and teachers made sure that pupils knew what they were to learn and what teachers were looking for. Lessons were interesting and involved practical activities, with typically half a lesson spent in hands-on activities.
- In the joint Early Years Foundation Stage/Year 1 class, there was a good balance between children learning through play and exploration of their topic, electricity, and more formally recorded work for Year 1 pupils beginning the National Curriculum.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is good. As well as providing useful written feedback for pupils in their workbooks, teachers assess learning at the end of each topic. Moreover, the school has implemented the assessment of pupils' progress materials in science and staff are now monitoring pupils' progress in their skills and understanding of science investigation very thoroughly.
- Although pupils contributed well in class during discussions, there were too few opportunities for them to take greater responsibility for all stages of the planning, execution and evaluation of investigations. In short, teachers did more for pupils than they needed to.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The school has moved from a discrete curriculum to one where science is taught within a relevant context where links with other subjects, such as English and design and technology, are made.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Effective planning ensures that the themes cover the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Visits to places of interest locally and further afield as part of a theme often have particular relevance to science, such as the forthcoming visit to a chocolate producer and a previous visit to the Science Museum in Kensington. Visits, visitors and after-school science clubs make a good contribution to the curriculum.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have access to a small outdoor area. This area was used fully during the visit to promote

children's knowledge and understanding. The school has developed a woodland area, in part, to further the study of science. However, Reception children have limited opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the natural world because of their lack of open access to a suitable, natural environment.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- You have provided a clear direction and the necessary leadership and management structures for effective leadership of science. This has led to improving standards in the subject.
- Science is led well. There is a clear policy, up-to-date development plans and a consistency of approach to science in each class. The subject leader monitors teachers' planning and pupils' work and regularly feeds back to staff on performance and outcomes.
- Teachers' continuing professional development is overseen effectively by the subject leader. The school has strong links with other schools in the area, including with secondary schools, so that expertise and ideas can be shared.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed included:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility at each stage for the investigations they undertake
- improving access to a natural environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to further their knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector