

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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Mr P Travis
Headteacher
Shipley CofE Primary School
Otley Road
Shipley
West Yorkshire
BD18 2PT

Dear Mr Travis

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation and that of staff and pupils, during my visit on 21 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 deputy headteacher; scrutiny of relevant documentation and pupils' work; discussions with pupils in Year 6; and observations of four science lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- From significantly low starting points when they enter school, pupils make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the national expectation in science, Level 4, is average and in some years, above average. This level of performance has been maintained for several years.
- Pupils enjoy science. Attitudes to science in most of the lessons observed were excellent. Year 6 pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their love of investigations and they looked forward with eagerness to science lessons in secondary school. Children in Reception thoroughly enjoyed making dough for gingerbread biscuits and talked about textures, changes, and

developed the use of their senses when working with their teacher in a baking session.

- All pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are supported during science lessons so that they have full access to the learning opportunities.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers ensure that science is taught in a practical, hands-on way. Pupils' science workbooks are full of records of investigations that they have undertaken. The marking of pupils' work is consistent, with teachers assessing what has been learnt and providing pupils with pointers for what could be done better.
- Teaching assistants make an important contribution to learning, particularly, but not exclusively, in supporting less able pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers emphasise the language of science well. Improving communication and language is the foremost need of many pupils and the acquisition of the vocabulary of science contributes positively to meeting this need.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the requirements of the science National Curriculum.
- The relevance of science for pupils is improving as the school adopts a more thematic and creative approach to teaching science. It is taught alongside other subjects and the focus is on pupils acquiring the skills of scientific investigation in more meaningful contexts.
- The school has developed positive links with science departments in the secondary schools to which its pupils transfer.
- Learning and interest in science are enhanced well by the many opportunities for pupils to make visits to places of scientific interest, often at the start of a new project, or during residential visits. Although a city school with few green spaces within its immediate grounds, the school makes the best possible use of these spaces. Many of the enrichment opportunities, such as the gardening club, support the study of living things.
- The lack of open space is most keenly felt within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has created a specific space for the youngest children, and developed imaginative opportunities for large-scale construction. However, access is provided only for a limited time, when supervision can be arranged, and this lack of continuous access to the

outdoors seriously restricts opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- Science is led and managed effectively by you and the deputy headteacher. Senior leaders recognise the core nature of science and provide a clear direction for the subject's development, such as in the move towards teaching the skills of science investigation.
- The supervision of science is rigorous. Teachers' plans and teaching are monitored regularly and pupils' progress is tracked term by term, year by year. Data are analysed so that trends in the performance of groups of pupils, individuals and the school as a whole may be identified and action taken when required.
- Little professional development has been undertaken recently in science. However, the subject has benefited from the development of the curriculum and the improvement in generic teaching skills promoted by the senior leaders. In addition, strong links have been forged with science departments in secondary schools, where much expertise is based.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed included:

- improving access to the outdoors for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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