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Mr S France
Headteacher
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Dear Mr France

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 19 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 good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- The percentage of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected level 4 and higher level 5 has been above the national average over the past few years. However, there was a dip in pupils' attainment in 2011 to a broadly average level. School assessment data and inspection evidence indicate that this dip has been reversed and that the attainment of current Year 6 pupils is above the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of science and their skills of scientific enquiry. All groups of pupils make broadly similar progress.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of issues affecting the environment are developed very well through their active and enthusiastic involvement in the school's eco-club.

- Pupils enjoy science, are keen to do their best in lessons and produce well-presented work. They have excellent attitudes to learning and work well independently as well as cooperating with each other very effectively during paired and group work.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use this well to plan lessons with imaginative activities that capture pupils' attention and stimulate their curiosity.
- Teachers are energetic and enthusiastic and most lessons proceed at a fast pace with pupils involved in a range of activities. Very occasionally, teachers talk for too long and this slows the pace of learning.
- Good use is made of questioning in lessons to check pupils' scientific knowledge and explore and develop their understanding of scientific ideas.
- Lessons are characterised by strong, positive relationships between staff and pupils.
- In the best lessons, careful consideration is given to matching activities to the full ability range of pupils in the class. However, this good practice is not yet consistently in place across all lessons.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and gives clear, helpful advice on how to improve their learning of science.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is outstanding.

- The science curriculum has been creatively planned to ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding of science are developed through topics which make interesting and meaningful links with other subjects.
- Key ideas in science are re-visited by pupils as they move up year groups in the school, ensuring that there is well-planned progression in their learning.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of scientific enquiry are skilfully integrated into the curriculum.
- Information and communication technology is used very effectively to enhance pupils' understanding of scientific ideas.
- Effective use is made of the school grounds, trips and visits to broaden and enhance pupils' enjoyment of and interest in science.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- Senior leaders have maintained a clear vision of science being taught through a creative and investigative approach during a period of change in the leadership of the subject in recent years.
- School leaders' high expectations are reflected in the challenging targets set for pupils.
- Pupils' overall attainment in science is tracked as they move through the school. However, the science leader recognises that the development of pupils' skills of scientific enquiry have not been sufficiently monitored in the past. A system to track pupils' progress in this aspect of science has just been introduced but its effectiveness and impact have yet to be established.
- The quality of provision in science is monitored through reviewing teachers' lesson planning and pupils' work. However, very little monitoring of the quality of teaching in science has taken place in recent years and, as a consequence, opportunities to identify, share and develop good practice have been missed.
- The science improvement plan is well written and identifies and addresses appropriate areas for development.
- The day-to-day management of science is very good and effective use is made of resources.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all teachers plan and deliver lesson activities that provide an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils in their class.
- establishing the system for monitoring the development of pupils' skills of scientific enquiry so that it has a positive impact on their progress.

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

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector