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Dear Miss Westley

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 28 May 2012 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, pupils and a member of the school's governing body; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of six lessons and a learning walk.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Pupils begin school with lower than typical age-related skills. Good provision in Nursery and Reception, along with a successful drive to raise attainment in English and mathematics across the school, has led to improving progress in science. Pupils' attainment in science is broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils demonstrate enthusiastic attitudes to learning during their lessons. They are very positive about the stimulating environment for learning that the school provides, including the extensive enrichment opportunities for science. Pupils are often dependent on teachers to take the next steps in their learning in lessons and opportunities are missed to challenge pupils, especially the most able.

- Pupils' work is marked, with some helpful commentary. However, older pupils only sometimes know the levels they are working at and they do not have a clear idea about what they need to do to improve. The school has focussed its efforts on raising attainment in English and mathematics, and good use is made of opportunities to develop literacy skills through extended writing and use of technical words.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory.

- In the best lessons, teachers use assessment information to plan activities which engage pupils and are carefully matched to meet their needs. Questioning is used well to challenge pupils and check understanding.
- In lessons where the quality of teaching was satisfactory, activities were less well matched to meet the needs of pupils, so they did not make the progress they could have done.
- Teachers try hard to relate science activities to a relevant context. However, in some cases, the resulting learning objectives did not lead to a structured sequence of learning and pupils were unclear about the knowledge and skills they should be acquiring during lessons.
- Emphasis during science lessons is placed on the development of pupils' investigative and practical skills. Pupils have a good understanding of how to plan practical investigations to gather fair and reliable results. Opportunities are missed, however, to develop pupils' analytical and evaluative skills, including supporting the development of numeracy skills.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The school's integrated curriculum provides good opportunities for science to be related to real-life situations and stimulate pupils' interests. However, on occasions, the depth and breadth of learning is not well developed and pupils are unclear about the reasons they are learning science.
- Practical resources are sufficient to meet the teaching demands, and kept under review by the science coordinator. Good use is made of the school environment to support lessons, including a garden, pond and ecology area.
- Pupils experience a good range of trips and a number of science-related after school clubs such as ecology clubs, gardening club and small animal care.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is satisfactory.

- The successful drive to improve pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy has resulted in very little science-specific staff development or training in recent years. Undeveloped links exist for enhancing teachers' science subject knowledge.
- The science coordinator monitors science provision on a day-to-day basis via staff discussion and some work scrutiny. Basic but robust tracking is in place to monitor progress and plans are in place to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are identified and addressed through effective intervention.
- Good short-term planning, especially in Key Stage 1, results in structured science lessons with activities that are carefully tailored to meet the needs of pupils. This good practice is not consistent in all years.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using assessment information to plan activities which are carefully tailored to meet pupils' needs, and which better support them to work independently during lessons, thereby challenging the most able
- improving the feedback given to pupils so that they are more aware of how well they are learning in science and the next steps they need to take to improve their learning
- ensuring that the planned curriculum gives breadth and depth to pupils' learning in science and leads to clear learning objectives and success criteria during lessons.

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

John Meinke
Additional Inspector