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Mrs C Palfreyman
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Dear Mrs Palfreyman

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 19 June 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 and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- The proportions of pupils who reach at least the expected Level 4 by the end of Year 6 are typically above average. Similarly the proportions reaching Level 2 by the end of Key Stage 1 are above average.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time from their below-average starting points.
- Pupils develop sound practical skills and a good understanding of the principles of scientific investigation. Opportunities are provided for them to discuss their scientific ideas, but written records of investigations sometimes lack more detailed explanations of results.
- Pupils behave well in their science lessons, showing interest and responding well to the tasks set. They collaborate well in group activities

and participate enthusiastically in discussions. Some older pupils show good independent-learning skills.

- Pupils' books show that a good range of science activities has been undertaken, including investigative work.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and encouraging and they work hard to plan a variety of activities including group work, paired activities, and experimental work.
- Learning activities are well contextualised. Lessons are well planned using a common planning format that includes different independent activities for pupils of different abilities. Learning intentions are clear. A focus is placed on ensuring that pupils are actively engaged in tasks that will develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- When pupils plan investigations, teachers provide appropriate structure and guidance but allow pupils a suitable degree of independence so that they learn well from developing their own ideas and discussion with their peers.
- In lessons, support is generally well targeted, and activities are appropriate to pupils' abilities but teachers' expectations of more able pupils are not always high enough.
- Teachers make some good use of questioning but miss some opportunities to encourage pupils to make more use of the appropriate scientific terminology in their answers.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly. Teachers make good use of praise but there are few comments designed to enable pupils to improve their work.
- Pupils' work is assessed carefully and the data is recorded for all year groups.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively in science learning, for example for research activities and in pupil presentations.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The science curriculum is well planned. The topic-based approach ensures that science topics are explored in detail with plenty of opportunities for experimental work. The curriculum focuses well on developing practical investigative science skills.
- A good range of enrichment opportunities is offered. Good use is made of relevant local venues such as museums. All year groups have at least one relevant trip or visit each year. Specialist science curriculum weeks provide valuable experiences and enable pupils to study a selection of topics in depth. Pupils have a good involvement in the Eco committee.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- Regular work scrutiny and discussions with pupils are used effectively to plan improvements.
- Teachers' planning is carefully monitored to ensure that the topic-based curriculum provides full national curriculum coverage.
- Pupils' progress in science is tracked effectively throughout the school.
- Monitoring of the quality of science teaching is limited but does include occasional learning walks.
- Teachers have had few opportunities for professional development in science recently but links with another local school are being developed to facilitate the sharing of good practice and exchange of ideas.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further developing pupils' scientific literacy skills by:
 - giving more emphasis to scientific vocabulary in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils use appropriate scientific terminology, both in discussion and in written work
- ensuring that lessons provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils and so increase the proportion gaining the higher level 5 by:
 - planning suitably demanding work, especially for more able pupils
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils receive clear guidance about how to improve their work and reach higher levels.

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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector