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Mr A Dewhurst
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dewhurst

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 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and visits to lessons in all years.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Pupils enter Reception with the knowledge, understanding and skills expected for their age. They make good progress during the Reception year and almost all children reach a good level of development in relation to their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, almost half of the Year 6 pupils achieve Level 5. This is above the national average and represents good progress relative to their starting points. School data indicate a similar picture of improving progress and rising attainment in other year groups.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and well-motivated in their science lessons because they enjoy the frequent and varied practical learning opportunities they have to explore, predict, observe, describe and explain. Attitudes to

learning are very positive and most pupils are able to work well independently. For example, pupils in Year 5 took on the role of 'researcher' and prepared to communicate their understanding in 'conference' groups.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about their science teaching. Planning typically incorporates a wide variety of activities that supports the intended learning well and promotes pupils' engagement in, and enjoyment of, science very effectively. Teachers also plan work to meet the needs of lower, middle and higher attaining pupils. Additional adults make a good contribution to pupils' learning in lessons.
- Stronger features of teaching include the systematic and regular focus on the teaching of skills of scientific enquiry alongside scientific knowledge and understanding; promoting pupils' skills in taking responsibility for their own learning and extending pupils' use of subject-specific vocabulary. For example, pupils in Year 6 suggested hypotheses and then interrogated data to see if the evidence supported their ideas.
- Less successful features of teaching observed included slower pace in parts of lessons; limited challenge in a few tasks, the use of a resource that did not promote an accurate scientific understanding and a missed opportunity to set current learning in the context of the 'big picture' of a topic.
- Assessment is accurate and teachers indicate the attainment level for individual pupils at the end of each topic. However, no analysis of the level of achievement this represents takes place. Marking and verbal feedback provide pupils with general guidance on how to improve but targets set are often lack precision. However, pupils report that they find feedback helpful.
- Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning and enable pupils to develop their ICT skills.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- Curriculum coverage of all four areas of programme of study is well balanced. Thoughtful links are made between different subjects including design technology and history to enhance learning. The curriculum is well resourced to inspire teachers to approach topics in an interesting way.
- Curriculum enrichment is extensive and contributes strongly to pupils' enjoyment and wider experience of science. Links with the nearby Environmental Learning Centre for example, make very good use of external expertise and enable access to specialist resources to support the teaching of certain topics in all year groups.

- Regular use of the diverse outdoor learning environment, science and engineering week activities, work with Sheffield University and visits to local facilities such as Kelham Island help pupils to develop their understanding of the importance and relevance of science well.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science are good.

- A clear vision is in place for science as an important subject in the school with a strong emphasis on enabling pupils to have diverse and memorable learning experiences.
- Robust monitoring provision in science has enabled leaders to have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. For example, a well-structured and detailed scrutiny of work and teachers' planning resulted in the identification of variation in approaches to teaching between classes. This is now being addressed.
- Findings of evaluation have been used well to target training for teachers, raise expectations for pupils' achievement and inform curriculum review and development.
- The use of assessment data to raise attainment and improve progress is under-developed. Cohort data are only collated once a year and analysis of data does not include evaluation of the attainment and progress of different groups. Targets for individual pupils are not used robustly or regularly by class teachers to check whether all pupils in each class are making good or better progress relative to their starting points, or, to ensure that the level of work planned is always sufficiently challenging to enable them to do so.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that leaders and teachers make more effective use of data and challenging targets to check and improve further the progress of all pupils.

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

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector