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Mrs L Findlay
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Findlay

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 6 December 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; discussion with the chair of the governing body, scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of four lessons jointly with the headteacher.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Most pupils begin school with lower than typical age-related skills. Good provision in Reception, along with a drive to raise attainment in science across the school, has led to improving progress in science. Pupils' attainment in science is broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils make more progress in Reception and across Key Stage 1, than in Key Stage 2. This is largely because older pupils of the highest ability do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils enjoy their science lessons and demonstrate positive attitudes to their science education. They are enthusiastic and are keen to explore scientific questions by planning and carrying out investigations. However,

opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge the older pupils, especially the most able.

- Pupils' work is marked, with some helpful commentary. Good use is made of opportunities in science to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of teaching in science

- The quality of teaching in science is good. Teachers plan lessons that contain a range of activities that actively engage pupils in learning. The opportunities provided for pupils to explore scientific ideas make a good contribution to the development of their skills of scientific enquiry and investigation.
- Pupils find lessons interesting, absorbing and enjoyable. Teachers try hard to model scientific concepts clearly and relate science lessons to real-life situations. Lessons move at a good pace. As a result, rates of learning are good.
- Questioning is used effectively to challenge pupils and check their understanding, and reshape tasks when necessary. However, pupils' responses are often required too quickly to allow for thought, reflection and working things out for themselves.
- In the majority of lessons teachers plan activities that are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. However, this is not always the case and on occasions activities are not sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- Science is taught both as a discreet subject and through extended topics. The science curriculum provides pupils with a broad and enjoyable science experience with an appropriate balance between the development of knowledge, understanding and skills at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Provision in Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children have a good variety of adult-led and child-initiated activities in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments. This is leading to a greater knowledge and understanding of the world around them.
- The commercial schemes of work are adapted by teachers to ensure that they meet the needs and interest of the pupils in their class. The development of pupils' skills of scientific enquiry takes a high profile. There are regular planned opportunities for pupils to design and carry out their own investigations.
- Pupils experience a good range of trips and a number of science-related after-school clubs such as the environmental club, gardening club, and cooking club. Trips include a visit to the local power station, outside science events and science demonstrations linked to industry.

Effectiveness of leadership in, and management of, science

The effectiveness of leadership in, and management of, science is good.

- The science leader works effectively to promote comprehensive science education within the context of a small school where science teaching takes place in small mixed-aged classes.
- A clear vision has been established for science education at the school which is based around developing pupils' all-round knowledge of science through enquiry and discovery.
- An effective system is in place to monitor the progress made by pupils. This is then used to target extra support to pupils when needed.
- The science leader has a good knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in science provision and outcomes. A plan is in place to drive improvement but opportunities to fully monitor and evaluate its impact are currently limited.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 4 and above at the end of Key Stage 2 by providing greater challenge in lessons for more able pupils
- improving the questioning in science so that pupils are given more time to reflect on their answers and work them out before responding.

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

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector