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Ms L Murhall
Headteacher
Bonsall CofE (A) Primary School
Church Street
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Dear Ms Murhall

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 25 January 2013 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Pupils make good progress relative to their starting points. In 2012, all pupils attained the expected Level 4 and most attained the higher Level 5.
- Pupils really enjoy science, talking with enthusiasm about what they are learning and memorable previous science experiences.
- Pupils are keen to ask their own questions, make predictions and plan how to carry out an investigation. They make careful observations and are encouraged to explain what they have found out.
- Pupils work well together when discussing their ideas in pairs or working collaboratively on a task. In the mixed Reception/Year 1 class pupils showed sustained concentration and great resilience when investigating floating and sinking using plasticine shapes.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers have a good knowledge of, and a great enthusiasm for, science; this clearly reflected in pupils' enjoyment and achievement.
- Teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities in each class. They make good use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning effectively.
- Lessons incorporate a wide range of teaching approaches that interest and engage pupils well. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to promote and extend pupils' use of scientific vocabulary.
- Questioning is used very effectively by teachers and teaching assistants to check pupils' prior knowledge, explore their current understanding and to extend their thinking.
- Marking of pupils' work pinpoints incorrect science and confirms where pupils have successfully demonstrated their knowledge or understanding. Some written feedback also identifies next steps in learning but this practice is not consistent across the school. Similarly, pupils do not always respond to a teacher comments.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- Pupils have a rich science learning experience. Very good use is made of links between different subjects and learning opportunities beyond the classroom to develop pupils' understanding and appreciation of the importance of science in our everyday lives.
- The broad curriculum provides frequent 'hands-on' learning experiences for pupils; these contribute well to their enjoyment and understanding. However, sometimes learning is not always made relevant to pupils so they are unsure about why the scientific question they are investigating is important.
- The curriculum provides a purposeful context for pupils to practice and develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.
- Enrichment of the curriculum for pupils of all ages is good; the local environment and external expertise are utilised effectively to enhance school-based provision.

Effectiveness of leadership in, and management of, science

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

- Science has a high priority in the school and all staff share the headteacher's passion for the subject. There is a strong commitment to

seeking out ways to further improve and enhance teaching quality and the curriculum.

- Pupils' attainment is tracked carefully using levelled subject statements to promote good progress and ensure any gaps in a pupils' knowledge or skills are addressed.
- Subject specific professional development has contributed well to improvements in teaching and the curriculum, particularly in enhancing investigative approaches to science and increasing the challenge for higher attaining pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring learning is always set in a relevant context to make the science 'real' for pupils
- giving greater emphasis to pupils' use of scientific vocabulary in their speaking and writing.

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