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Mrs Donnelly
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Donnelly

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 October 2006 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in science are satisfactory.

- Attainment in the Foundation Stage is good.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 the majority of pupils achieve the expected levels, although there is small amount of underachievement at the higher levels.
- The school analyses data well and has accurately identified this underachievement and the underlying causes. There is a good action plan to address these issues. Improving achievement in science is a priority for the school.

- Pupils enjoy science and work with interest and enthusiasm. The talk knowledgeable about the work they have done and are proud to show the displays of their work around the school.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is satisfactory.

- Although teaching generally has many strengths, the teaching of science is only satisfactory.
- Teachers have a very good teaching manner that leads to good relationships with their classes and with individual pupils. They show sensitivity to the needs of all pupils.
- Extensive use is made of questioning to develop teaching points.
- Teaching is lively and engages all pupils well; behaviour is excellent.
- Some teachers demonstrate excellent practice in marking and providing feedback to the pupils against clear learning outcomes. However, this is not consistent across all science lessons.
- Although satisfactory, the standard of work in some science lessons is limited by low levels of challenge and lack of differentiation.
- Pupils are not encouraged to think scientifically and teaching does not develop scientific reasoning, particularly through the use of questioning. Pupils do not support their predictions and conclusions with scientific reasoning and this is not challenged.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Science is a priority in the school and receives sufficient time.
- There is a clear framework for planning. Good use is made of the local environment and the use of, for example science theatre groups, to enrich the science curriculum.
- There is a good focus on improving work in scientific enquiry, particularly on pupils designing and planning their own investigations and developing more independence. A good set of investigations has been identified to provide good progress through each year. However, these tend to be 'teacher led' and limited use is made of different starting points to encourage pupils to formulate their own ideas for investigation.
- Good attention is given to developing pupils' use of scientific vocabulary. However, pupils' writing about science is rather formal and little consideration is given to a range of different purposes, styles and audience.
- There are good links between science and numeracy.
- School is making good use of set of pre and post-topic tests to check pupils' progress. This has not yet been extended to monitoring progress in scientific enquiry.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The headteacher is committed to improving science and has recently appointed a new subject leader who is enthusiastic and has good ideas for developing the subject further.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and has led to a good action plan focusing on the key areas required to sustain further improvement.
- Monitoring is good, focused well on the priorities for improvement and with a good balance of observations of teaching, extensive work scrutiny and rigorous analysis of data.
- An audit has been undertaken to identify levels of confidence and professional development needs in science.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- Teachers demonstrate great sensitivity for the needs of individual pupils and very good attention is given to all pupils at all levels of attainment.
- The school analyses data well to monitor the progress of individuals carefully, and uses this to provide appropriate interventions and support.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making use of a broader range of starting points for practical work in science
- ensuring that investigative work enables pupils to achieve high levels of attainment
- encouraging pupils to think more scientifically, develop their scientific reasoning and promote greater independence
- the use of different styles and approaches when pupils are writing about their work in science
- ensuring that all pupils receive good feedback on their work and progress in science, and that higher levels of challenge are set for them.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jim Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector