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Mrs Lindsay
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Dear Mrs Lindsay

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, and for making me feel so welcome during my visit on 12 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in science are good.

- Pupils in both classes are working at or beyond expected levels and all make at least satisfactory progress, with the majority making good or very good progress.
- Younger pupils in both classes make very good progress as a result of the standard of work set, and through the very good support provided by older pupils.
- Investigative work should provide more challenge for more able pupils.
- Pupils have good practical and observation skills, and they plan, organise and manage their work very well.

- All pupils have a good understanding of scientific vocabulary and use it well.
- All pupils really enjoy science and work with interest and enthusiasm.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Teaching is lively, interesting and engages all pupils well; lessons have good pace.
- Lessons are planned very well to ensure that all pupils make progress with good attention to developing the key ideas being covered.
- Teachers make very good use of questioning, are sensitive to pupils' responses and use these well to develop teaching points.
- Teaching assistants are fully involved in lessons and excellent teamwork ensures good support for all pupils.
- Teaching does not fully develop pupils' scientific reasoning skills. For example, pupils' predictions and conclusions are not sufficiently challenged to encourage pupils to use their scientific knowledge and understanding.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Science is a priority in the school and receives a good amount of time; good use is made of blocks of time that enable pupils to follow investigations and topics through. There is appropriate coverage of all areas of science.
- The school uses a good practical, hands-on approach to science that pupils enjoy.
- The school makes good links between different areas of the curriculum, whilst recognising that some aspects of science need to be covered in a more discrete way.
- Good links are made with literacy and numeracy to both develop and apply pupils' skills within science.
- Good use is made of the local and wider environment to enrich work in science.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- In your role of science co-ordinator, you show commitment to further improving science and provide clear direction. You are fully aware of the advantages and potential limitations of teaching science to classes covering such wide age ranges in this small school.

- The self-evaluation recognises the strengths in science, but also that more evidence is required to identify clearly what is going well and what needs to be improved. Plans are in place to focus monitoring to obtain this evidence.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is outstanding.

- Teachers demonstrate great sensitivity and the attention given to the needs of individual pupils is excellent.
- Older pupils provide good role models and give excellent support to younger pupils.
- The school analyses data very well to monitor the progress of individuals carefully, and uses this to provide appropriate interventions and support.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using investigative work in science to provide higher levels of challenge for the most able pupils
- encouraging pupils to think more scientifically, develop their scientific reasoning and promote greater independence.

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