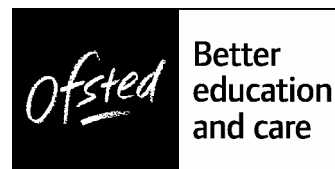


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Mr R N Leighton  
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Dear Mr Leighton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18-19 September 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.

- Key Stage 3 results were outstanding in 2005. The proportion of pupils who achieved level 5 and above was much higher than the national figure, as was the proportion who achieved level 6 and above. Measures which take account of contextual factors show that pupils' achievement improved steadily between 2003 and 2005 and the school was in the top 3% of schools on this measure in 2005.
- The Key Stage 3 results in 2006 were not as good as 2005. The proportion of pupils who achieved level 5 and above remained well above the national figure but was slightly lower than in 2005. The

proportion achieving level 6 or more fell by 20%, but was still higher than the national figure.

- GCSE results in science (double award) are good. Almost three quarters of pupils gained grades A\*-C in 2006. The A\*-C pass rate for boys was higher than that for girls, but a higher proportion of girls achieved grades A\* and A. Pupils do better in science than in many of their other subjects.
- Behaviour is good.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in science are good.

- In lessons there is a good range of activities which engage and motivate pupils and promote learning. These include group discussions, pupil presentations and worksheets. Practical examples are used effectively to help develop understanding of abstract concepts.
- Good use is made of experimental work to develop knowledge and understanding and to develop thinking skills.
- There is effective use of ICT in teaching and learning. In observed lessons student presentations made good use of Powerpoint and electronic whiteboards are in regular use.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Explanations are clear.
- Teachers make some effective use of question and answer techniques.
- Some lesson plans lack detail and give insufficient attention to meeting the needs of all pupils to ensure that all are well supported and can participate effectively.
- No unsatisfactory lessons were observed.
- Assessment and tracking systems are detailed and thorough and help to identify underachievers.

## Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- There are very good enrichment opportunities.
- 'Science week' offered a wide range of activities in different subjects with a science theme, enabling cross curricular links to be made.
- ICT is used well to enhance learning.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum includes an appropriate choice of courses, including courses which lead to two or three GCSEs in science subjects.

## Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- There is much relevant comprehensive documentation such as schemes of work.

- There is a lack of formal strategies for sharing good practice, although some exchange of ideas does happen informally.
- The science self-evaluation is broadly accurate.
- Communication within the science team is good. Teaching assistants attached to the science team are well informed.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in science is satisfactory.

- Some pupils with additional needs receive appropriate support in lessons from teaching assistants.
- In a minority of observed lessons teaching and learning were not planned to take into account the needs of all pupils, including those with specific additional needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that lessons meet the needs of all pupils by ensuring that support and activities are planned so that all pupils can participate fully
- continuing to develop strategies to raise attainment to improve the proportion of pupils achieving at least level 6 at Key Stage 3
- developing strategies for sharing good practice to further improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more lessons match the best practice that exists in the department.

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

Ruth James  
Her Majesty's Inspector