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Mrs N Holloway
Headteacher
St James' Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Holloway

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 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 the headteacher and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and 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 overall.

- In Key Stage 2 assessment tests fewer pupils achieve level 4, the standard expected for eleven year olds, than is the case nationally.
- Pupils who reach level 3 by the end of Key Stage 1 achieve well in the Key Stage 2 test. In 2005 all pupils who had achieved level 3 in Key Stage 1 went on to achieve level 5 in the Key Stage 2 test.
- Data which takes into account contextual factors shows that overall pupils did not do as well in science as would be expected in 2005.
- Boys achieve better than girls.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning in science are satisfactory, with some good features.

- Good use is made of practical activities which motivate pupils and give them opportunities to participate. For example, one observed lesson featured a role play exercise to illustrate particle theory.
- In some lessons there are examples of differentiation by ability, for example in the way work is recorded.
- In lessons teachers do not give enough attention to developing pupils' verbal skills. There are too few structured opportunities for pupils to talk about science and their ideas, which would help improve their understanding of scientific concepts, as well as improving their vocabulary.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- There are appropriate resources which enable teachers to use a range of different practical activities in teaching and learning.
- More use of ICT to support learning is now planned.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- Issues identified at the last inspection are being addressed.
- Resources for science have improved. The use of ICT to support learning is now better planned and staff training has been undertaken.
- These actions have not yet had sufficient impact on standards.

Inclusion

Inclusion in science is satisfactory.

- In lessons pupils with additional learning needs receive appropriate support. There is some differentiation by outcome in science lesson planning.
- The underachievement of some girls in science has not yet been overcome.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to improve the use of assessment and tracking data to ensure that the information is used effectively in teaching and learning to focus on areas where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding
- in lessons, to provide more structured opportunities for pupils to talk about science, to use scientific terminology and to explore scientific ideas
- in Key Stage 2 to ensure that all lessons are planned to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, including those with below average attainment at Key Stage 1, to ensure that all pupils develop a sound grasp of scientific concepts.

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