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Mrs Williams
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Williams

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 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 the science are satisfactory.

- Pupils arrive in the school showing standards in literacy well below average.
- Achievement, as measured by Key Stage 2 tests, shows considerable variation from year to year but is satisfactory.
- The school's self-evaluation identifies the levels of literacy to be a significant factor to overcome for pupils to show their capabilities in science.
- Significantly pupils are showing higher achievements in science compared with mathematics and English.
- In 2005 67% of pupils at Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 achieved Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2 compared with 0% in English.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is at least good with some that is outstanding.

- Teaching and learning science are consistently good and in some lessons teaching was outstanding.
- Teachers use a range of activities to engage pupils and they ask questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding and to keep them on task.
- Behaviour of pupils was well managed in all the lessons seen, and it is carried out with clarity and in an encouraging and positive way.
- Teaching across the age range is consistent in the way lessons are planned, structured and managed.
- Pupils are benefiting from this consistent approach, and as they develop they are operating in increasingly independent ways and with growing confidence.
- Pupils clearly enjoy science and the well managed practical activities are helping to build confidence, interest and scientific understanding.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- There is a well planned sequence of learning experiences for each year in the school across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The schemes of work, based on the QCA published materials, meet the needs of each year group and effectively cover National Curriculum requirements.
- In practice in lessons literacy needs were clearly addressed but these provisions are not identified on the schemes of work.
- It was not clear in planning how the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are being addressed.
- The scheme of work and shorter term planning clearly identifies sound strategies for meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Experiences of ICT in science are underdeveloped and are not sufficiently planned into the scheme of work.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The co-ordinators set good examples for teaching and provide staff with a well developed and supportive scheme of work.
- There is a good and appropriate emphasis on ensuring pupils have good, well structured science investigation experiences.
- Teachers feel very well supported and guided by the co-ordinators.

- There are clear strategies for ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met.
- While teacher assessment through observation and marking are made explicit, there is not a system of reliable objective testing in place to evaluate the learning of pupils.
- There are good routines for collaborative review of science and clear evidence of strong team work.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- In observing teaching and in analysing performance data, there is no evidence of pupils not having equal opportunities to learn.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing a common assessment framework that includes reliable objective testing, both to measure standards attained and to provide constructive experiences of testing
- enhancing the provision of ICT equipment for pupils to use in science contexts, to enrich and extend their learning experiences
- planning systematically for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

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

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector