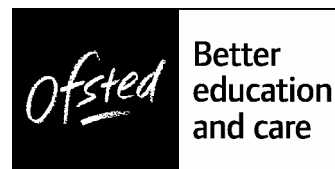


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Ms Crosher
The Headteacher
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Dear Ms Crosher

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

I thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 15 - 16 January 2007 to look at work in science.

The visit provided much useful evidence for reporting in science. The institution will not be named in any publication without your permission and most evidence will be used at a general level, to identify trends and issues for development.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in my feedback at the end of the visit, to support development in science. This follows:

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards in science are good.

- The school analyses performance data thoroughly and has a clear view of the standards achieved by pupils.
- The data for science in Key Stage 3 show that standards are significantly above similar schools, even though there are year on year fluctuations.
- Pupils are showing higher achievement in science than in English or mathematics in Key Stage 3.
- At GCSE the pupils are succeeding better than most other subjects in the school in terms of GCSE grades A* to C.
- Assessment and recording systems enable the science subject leader and team to monitor the performance of pupils effectively.

- The observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work also demonstrates good standards and achievement.
- The response of pupils to inspector's questions showed, on the whole, maturity, self-confidence, indicative of good personal development.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, varying from satisfactory to outstanding.

- Around two thirds of lessons were good, some involved outstanding teaching.
- From lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and departmental planning it is clear that pupils engage in a good variety of activity.
- Pupils enjoy science and show appreciation of the variety of work and the way teachers help them.
- For much of the time pupils are well engaged in work and are expected to take an active part in their learning.
- In less effective lessons the pace of learning is slower and the challenge given to pupils is inadequate to prevent off task activity.
- In most lessons questioning and assessment for learning techniques ensure the engagement of pupils and allows teachers to check the progress they make.
- Marking of pupils' work is not consistently carried out and pupils commented on the differences in amount of written feedback they receive on their work from different teachers.
- The use of ICT is not extensive, and better incorporation of its use by pupils could help their learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The Key Stage 3 scheme of work ensures coverage of the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- While the scheme of work has a structure enabling cross-referencing of science work to other areas of development, these are not well exploited, and ICT is under-represented.
- The school has chosen a new course for science GCSE which they are evaluating during its implementation.
- With the intent of ensuring courses are provided for the needs of all pupils, the school plans to introduce courses in three separate sciences of biology, physics and chemistry.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management in science are good.

- There is a clear strategy for assessing and recording the attainment of pupils through end of unit tests, the outcomes of which are recorded on appropriate spreadsheets.
- The subject leader is considering how other assessment tools can contribute to the department's knowledge of pupils' progress, and evaluate how effective teaching is.
- Teaching staff feel well supported and led by the subject leader.
- The subject leader has a rational and pragmatic approach to management, seeking to bring about developments through collaboration.
- Planning of the curriculum is good, and there is a clear intent to continue to improve e.g. to use the introduction of a new National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 to refresh and improve the courses for pupils in a number of ways.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is good.

- Pupils across all groups are making good progress. Where some differences are indicated the school has introduced strategies to address them. In class teachers, on the whole, ensure all pupils have the opportunity to learn in line with their attainment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continue to develop courses offered to pupils in Key Stage 4 to ensure all have access to appropriate and engaging courses in science
- improve the use that pupils make of ICT in their science work
- consider how formative assessment can be improved in consistency, quality and usefulness for pupils
- increase the range of assessment activity, including self-assessment and peer assessment, to contribute to the evaluation of pupils' progress and the effectiveness of teaching and planning.

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 HMI
Specialist Adviser for Science