

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr M Gate
Headteacher
Chapelfield Primary School
Clough Street
Radcliffe
Manchester
M26 1LH

Dear Mr Gate

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 February 2007 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. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with two staff, two governors and two groups of pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject, science, was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in science are good.

- Pupils enter the school with below average skills. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception in developing speaking and listening and social skills, and in understanding the world around them.
- In Key Stage 1, there is good development of ideas in science and pupils talk well about their science investigations. However, progress in science is limited by insufficient focus on spelling and presentation during their Year 2 work in the subject. In 2006, no pupils were recorded as reaching the national level 3 in science.
- In Key Stage 2, there was very good achievement for girls and satisfactory achievement for boys in 2006. Overall, standards were above those found nationally, showing marked improvement from 2005. In Key Stage 2 lessons, there is good progress. Boys and girls make good contributions in lessons and

generally present themselves well in book work. A few boys lack confidence in talking.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good.

- All lessons seen were good. They were generally characterised by careful planning and high expectations. Pupils of different abilities were well catered for. There was some good use of ICT.
- Sometimes teachers talked a little too long or question and answer work was insufficiently brisk. Occasionally, expectations of what pupils might come up with in planning investigations were unrealistic and therefore unproductive.
- The work of older pupils in Key Stage 2 shows excellent marking by teachers. This painstaking effort is matched by equal commitment on the part of pupils who take great pride in their work. In Reception, there is very good practice with records of pupils' achievements. Testing, tracking of progress and identification of pupils' weaknesses in science are underdeveloped in the middle years of Key Stage 2.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- The scheduling of National Curriculum units of work for pupils in a range of mixed age classes is secure. There is appropriate attention to investigative work. Work in Early Years is imaginative and covers learning requirements well. Work sheets in Key Stage 2 allow sufficient opportunity for prose.
- No use is made of commercial materials, so teachers have to plan lessons for themselves.
- The scheme of work does not make provision for re-visiting topics that some pupils in Key Stage 2 have not mastered fully.
- The opportunity to develop spelling and presentation skills is not exploited fully in science work in Key Stage 1.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of science are good.

- Planning ensures complete and coherent coverage of the programmes of study.
- Lessons, teachers' planning and pupils' books are monitored on a rolling programme by the coordinator and there is helpful feedback to teachers on matters that arise.
- The coordinator is in touch with developments in the subject through local authority support and this is shared with other staff.
- There are effective systems to ensure that science resources are available to teachers.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- Since identified as an issue at the last inspection, challenge for the more able pupils has become good. The less able are well catered for.
- The possibility that some older boys are not as engaged as they might be is not being explored sufficiently.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- focusing more on spelling and presentation in Year 2
- improving assessment, tracking and intervention in the middle years of Key Stage 2
- introducing teachers to some commercially produced teaching materials
- exploring the confidence and engagement of boys in Key Stage 2
- further honing teachers' classroom skills.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As I explained previously, 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 Bennetts
Her Majesty's Inspector