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03 February 2007

Miss Hughes
The Headteacher
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Dear Miss Hughes

Ofsted survey inspection programme – science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 31 January and 1 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. 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.

- Standards are improving and those seen in lessons are in line with the national average, both in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4.
- Pupils' achievement in both key stages is good when compared with other similar schools.
- Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards learning. They show good behaviour, apply themselves well and contribute to lessons in responsible ways.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Lessons are very well planned and contain a good variety of activities, including excellent use of ICT, that are designed to match the needs of all the pupils. Teachers have very positive relationships with pupils, and are skilled at keeping pupils actively engaged and on task.
- Learning support assistants are particularly well deployed and very often proactive with their help.
- The teachers check that learning has been achieved and often pupils are themselves involved in this process. Books are well marked and most pupils know how well they have met the targets they have been set. They are given some help in how to improve.
- Pupils speak very highly of their teachers, the way they teach and the good support they give.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum offered in science meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- There is a wide variety of resources, including laptops, and textbooks designed for those pupils with lower literacy levels.
- The school has chosen new GCSE science courses that are relevant to the needs of all the pupils. Already there is evidence of good progress being achieved.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The head of department provides good support and guidance to the team of dedicated science teachers. There is particularly good support for trainee teachers, many of whom continue to work at the school after they have finished their training.
- The science department works well as a team and there is a positive drive for further improvement.
- There is a clear development plan that usefully identifies important areas such as regularly checking the progress of all students and assessment for learning.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is good.

- Strategies for differentiation are effective and are made clear in planning.
- The performance data show that no group is showing poorer progress than others. In class also there is good evidence of all groups making good progress.
- Teachers show great sensitivity to the needs of individuals and are ensuring that pupils have every opportunity to learn effectively and develop in the widest sense.
- Learning support assistants are particularly well deployed and very often proactive with their help.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- maximise the attainment of students of all abilities, particularly at Key Stage 4, with all students now doing the new GCSE suite of courses
- involving the students more in how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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

Alison J Thomson (Dr)
Additional Inspector