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13 February 2007

Mr Turner  
The Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Turner

Ofsted survey inspection programme – science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07 - 08 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 are now close to those seen nationally, both in Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4.
- Students' achievement in both key stages is good when compared with other similar schools.
- Students have good relationships with their teachers and peers, behave well and contribute to lessons in a mature and courteous way.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Lessons are well planned with a good variety of sequenced activities. These link well to the learning outcomes, although the latter can sometimes be a little complicated.
- Much teaching is innovative and involves the students in questioning scientific ideas in a mature way.
- Very effective use is made of teaching assistants, particularly for students for whom English is not their first language.
- Assessment of learning is a particular strength in many lessons, with students involved in checking their own learning and that of their peers.
- The marking of books is variable, although many students know how well they have met the targets they have been set. They are given some help in how to improve.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum offered in science meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Schemes of work are differentiated to meet the needs of all learners.
- The school has chosen new GCSE science courses that are relevant to the needs of all the students. These are supporting lively and well contextualised science in ways that allow students to engage in a range of learning styles, including discussion.

## Leadership and Management

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The head of department provides good support and guidance to the team of expert science teachers. Members of the department work well as a team and there is a positive drive for further improvement.
- Some of the practice within the department is held up as a 'model' within the school and has also been recognised more widely.
- There is a clear development plan that usefully identifies important areas such as assessment for learning, marking and homework policy, and seeking the views of stakeholders more.

## Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is good.

- 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.
- Strategies for differentiation are effective and are made clear in planning.
- Very effective use is made of teaching assistants, particularly for students for whom English is not their first language.
- Tracking systems of all students are good, with good intervention strategies to tackle underachievement and low attainment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- make learning outcomes clearer and linked to National Curriculum levels/GCSE grades
- ensure marking is consistent and helpful to pupils in improving their work.

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