

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



05 March 2007

Mr Calver
Headteacher
Bacton Community Middle School
Wyverstone Road
Bacton
Suffolk
IP14 4LH

Dear Mr Calver

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 February and 01 March 2007 to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, I looked at the provision for professional development in science, innovative and creative approaches to the teaching of science, and transition arrangements from first school and onto upper school.

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 overall effectiveness of science is good.

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

Achievement and standards in science

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- In science at Key Stage 2 there are above average standards that have risen from 2005 to 2006 coupled with rising Contextual Value Added.
- The school's own Year 8 data from science unit tests show the majority of pupils to be at or better than their predicted level already. The standards of work seen in pupil books, and in lessons, were above average; progress in lessons is generally satisfactory.

- Pupils know the levels at which they are working, know what they ought to be getting in tests and whether they are on track to reach their expected grade.
- Pupil behaviour is good, with pupils well behaved in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils of all ages are willing to talk about school fluently and said they felt safe, thought the school dealt well with any bullying, and even knew what the school council had achieved!

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning in science are satisfactory.

- There is very good teacher-pupil rapport and a safe, friendly working ethos with very good classroom management and high quality display.
- There are good learning resources that are well organised and maintained.
- In some lessons the pace was slow, because introductions took too long and there was not enough opportunity for pupils to demonstrate independence.
- Much of the written work was very structured, restricting pupils' opportunity to express their own ideas and understanding.

Quality of curriculum in science

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- There are plans to deliver a condensed Key Stage 3 programme so that in 2009 Year 8 pupils will do national science tests. This may help to inject a sense of urgency to lessons.
- Schemes of work are well organised and provide a clear programme for teachers.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory overall with some good features.

- Very well-organised resources for learning that include good accommodation for science, very good display in laboratories and a consistently good working ethos in the laboratories.
- Well qualified staff are keen to improve provision further.
- Transition from first to middle school is well managed because the first schools operate a common Year 4 baseline testing system.
- Middle to upper school transfer is not fully taking into account the learning of Year 8 pupils. However, the proposed 'condensed Key Stage 3' programme has the potential to improve this aspect.

- Continuing professional development (CPD) relies on local authority consultants.

Inclusion

- Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are smoothly included in science lessons thanks to skilled and unobtrusive teaching assistant support.
- All groups of learners make at least satisfactory progress in science.

Areas for improvement in science, which we discussed, included:

- raise the pace and challenge of some lessons, by increasing the time for pupils to act independently and so do more practical activity
- use assessment data to plan differentiated tasks within lessons
- include pupil self-assessment at the start of topics to help plan the best pathway through the topic for each pupil
- give more time for pupils to express their own understanding verbally and in writing, so that teachers see what pupils really think and marking becomes more diagnostic.

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

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector