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Mrs Maureen Munday
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Munday

Ofsted survey inspection programme – science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07 March 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in science are satisfactory.

- The proportions of pupils attaining level 4 and above in the Key Stage 2 SATs were around the national averages in 2005 and 2006. The proportions attaining level 5 were below national averages.
- Data which take into account pupils' prior attainment and contextual factors show that in 2004 progress in science during Key Stage 2 was good, but in 2005 and 2006 it was satisfactory. It is noted that for the 2006 cohort there was very high mobility and more than half the pupils had joined the school after Year 1. This group included two pupils who joined the school during Year 6.
- Pupils' work scrutinised during the inspection was satisfactory overall. Many pupils have difficulty spelling scientific terms correctly.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in science are satisfactory.

- Teachers are committed and conscientious and work hard to find appropriate activities to engage pupils, promote interest and motivate.
- Teachers make some good use of question and answer techniques to check prior knowledge, reinforce previous learning, and to check understanding.
- Good use is made of interactive electronic whiteboards in lessons.
- In some lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning in science. For example, in a lesson on diet pupils eagerly discussed with each other their own food diaries, and how well they met the guidelines for a healthy diet.
- There is much whole class teaching which does not differentiate between pupils of different ages, year groups or abilities.
- There is insufficient support for some pupils for whom English is an additional language, particularly new arrivals.
- In some activities in lessons there is insufficient focus on the scientific aspects of the activities pupils are undertaking. For example, in a lesson where pupils were making drawings of the results of an experiment showing that coloured water had been taken up by flowers, some pupils focused too much on making accurate drawings of the jug, leaving them little time to write their explanation of what had happened in the experiment.
- Assessment is planned to include an initial assessment of each topic, which helps teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- End of unit assessments are carried out throughout the school to monitor individual progress in science.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The school moved to a topic based curriculum two years ago to help promote interest and put science in context.
- There have been gaps in the coverage of science for some pupils. These result from the pattern of classes with different mixes of year groups each year, and also from the move to a topic based curriculum.
- Cross curricular links are beginning to be developed. For example, in a lesson on identification keys pupils made use of their ICT skills to produce a branching key.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- The development plan recognises that achievement in science at Key Stage 2 has declined since 2004, and that this needs to be addressed. The development plan also identifies scientific enquiry skills as an area for development.
- The science coordinator has produced a file of well illustrated booster materials for use with year 6 pupils.
- The need for more staff training in teaching the skills of scientific enquiry has not yet been addressed.
- The science coordinator has taken steps to improve assessment in science following the introduction of the topic based curriculum.
- The school has recognised that there have been problems with coverage of the science curriculum for some pupils. This is now being addressed and tackled. Good cooperation between teachers at transition points is critical to ensuring that appropriate topics are identified for study for each class each year, to avoid omission or repetition for the particular groups of pupils concerned.
- The need to provide better support to newly arrived pupils who do not speak English is recognised. You sought to appoint a Polish speaking teaching assistant earlier this year, but were not able to do so.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds are welcomed. There is a harmonious atmosphere in school, and teachers are encouraging and supportive.
- Teaching assistants provide appropriate support to some individuals and small groups in lessons.
- There is inadequate support for newly arrived pupils who do not speak English.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- leadership and management need to have a stronger emphasis on curriculum planning, and monitoring and evaluation throughout the school, to ensure that any problems are identified at an early stage and action taken quickly to remedy them
- differentiation in teaching and learning needs to be improved to ensure that work is appropriately pitched for the different ages, year groups and abilities in lessons to help improve pupils' progress
- support arrangements for newly arrived pupils who do not speak English need to be improved to ensure that these pupils are able to benefit as much as possible from their lessons.

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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector