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Ms Y Jeffrey
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Jeffrey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 September 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 yourself, the subject leader for science, and with children from Years 2 and 6, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work and observation of two full and two part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in science is good and standards are well above average.

- Children make good progress in their science lessons.
- End of key stage test results and assessments are generally above average. In the most recent national tests and assessments (2007), the school has performed particularly well in science with all children at Years 2 and 6 reaching the national expectation and significant improvements in the proportion of children reaching Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6.
- Children have good attitudes to learning in science lessons and they work well together when carrying out investigations.
- Science lessons make a strong contribution towards the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes of 'Staying safe' and 'Being healthy', particularly the latter with an emphasis on what constitutes a healthy diet and the promotion of a physically active lifestyle.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good; a number of teachers have a strong science background. Teachers make lessons interesting by using a wide range of activities for the children and by involving them in first hand experiences.
- In the Foundation Stage (Reception), within the promotion of children's knowledge and understanding of the world there is an appropriate emphasis on the beginnings of science thinking skills, such as prediction and observation.
- Generally, too much is already prepared for children. They have insufficient opportunity to design their own investigations, prepare the materials they need, and to record their findings for themselves.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is satisfactory. Good features are developing.

- The science curriculum is based on the programmes of study, supplemented by material from a commercial scheme of work.
- Science forms the basis of a number of out-of-school visits to places of local interest, capitalising on the rich environmental resources close to hand in the Peak District.
- Science makes a strong contribution to the ECM agenda (see above, under 'Achievement and standards').
- One of the school's areas for development is to forge more effective links between the different subjects. Science is playing a part in this. Teachers routinely plan for children to use ICT in science lessons, and in one lesson, science was linked imaginatively to dance, using children's interpretation of electricity in a circuit as the basis for the lesson.

Leadership and management of science

The leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- School leadership is strong. This is clearly demonstrated in the effectiveness of the action taken to raise standards, including within science, by setting high expectations of teachers and children, setting challenging targets, and monitoring and tracking progress rigorously.
- Science is not, nor has been, a priority for development for several years, although, like other subjects, it comes under periodic review.
- These reviews have been managed effectively by the subject leader; for example, looking at schemes of work, identifying the skills needed for children to reach the higher levels in investigations, and examining pupils' workbooks. Resources for science, which include guidance for teachers on suitable web-sites, are of good quality and are very well organised in this school where space is at a premium.

- However, leadership and management tasks in science have been focused at too low a level. The examination of children's work, for example, has concentrated on presentation and spellings, rather than assessing the children's understanding of science. You have identified the need to improve the quality of subject leadership as part of distributing leadership and management more effectively and raising standards further.

Inclusion

Inclusion in science is good.

- Teachers often plan for children to work in mixed ability groups during investigations, encouraging all children to make a contribution using their different strengths.
- Teachers' questioning skills are good: they ensure that all children are involved within question and answer sessions.
- Boys' attitudes towards science are good because teachers use a variety of problem-solving challenges to motivate and interest them.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving teaching and learning in science including the assessment of critical science skills
- developing the curriculum in science, to provide more time for investigations of high quality.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector