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Mrs M Ireland
St Peters Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ireland

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in science are broadly average and achievement is good.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have risen in science for the past 2 years. In 2007 standards at the end of Year 2 were slightly above the national average. In Year 6 the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 was above the national average while the percentage achieving the higher level 5 was below average.
- Given the pupils attainment on entry to the school, the overall progress of pupils in science from reception through to Year 6 is good. However, the progress of more able pupils in Key Stage 2 is not as strong as the progress made by other pupils in the school.
- Girls and boys and pupils from different minority ethnic groups make similar progress.
- Pupils' attitude to learning and behaviour in lessons is very good. They show a real interest in science, are keen to ask and answer questions and readily participate in the activities arranged for them.

- Every Child Matters outcomes are developed well. Science lessons promote children's enjoyment, their knowledge of being healthy and staying safe.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The overall quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Good teaching in science is underpinned by strong, generic teaching skills.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well prepared with a wide range of activities and clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils.
- Teachers have positive relationships with pupils, and are skilled at keeping pupils actively engaged and on task.
- Targeted questioning is used effectively by teachers to check and develop pupils understanding of science.
- Pupils say they enjoy science lessons and that they particularly like the opportunities provided for them to design and carry out their own investigations.
- Some lessons in Key Stage 2 do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
- The marking of pupils' work is good. It gives helpful advice to pupils about how to improve.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is well organised and is closely linked to National Curriculum units of work.
- Long term planning indicates that key concepts are revisited as pupils move through the school reinforcing and extending learning.
- Scientific investigations are well integrated into schemes of work. This ensures that there is good progression in skill development.
- Schemes of work do not make clear reference to how cross curricular links with other subjects could be developed. Although in the lessons seen during this visit teachers' lesson plans made reference to links with literacy and numeracy this aspect of work in science is not yet sufficiently planned and co-ordinated.
- The science curriculum is enriched, and pupils enjoyment of science enhanced, by a wide range of science trips, visitors and links with local schools.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are satisfactory.

- There has been discontinuity in the leadership and management of science over the past two years due to changes in the subject co-ordinator. This has had an impact on the speed of development in this subject area. Two new joint co-ordinators have been appointed from September 2007.
- The new science co-ordinators have carried out a useful audit of science and accurately identified some key areas for improvement.

- The senior leadership of the school has ensured that during this time of change there has been a continuing emphasis in science on developing pupils' sense of enquiry and curiosity in the world around them.
- There has been little monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in science over the past two years.
- Challenging targets are set for pupils in science. The progress of pupils towards these targets is monitored effectively. The programme of intervention to support those pupils who are underachieving is not so well developed in science as it is in English and mathematics.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is good.

- The school provides a caring and supportive environment for all pupils. Very good relationships exist in the school with all pupils working extremely well together during science lessons.
- Learning support assistants provide those pupils with special educational needs with good support. This ensures that they make good progress in science.
- The school monitors the progress of all pupils well. It is aware of the need to improve the progress made by the most able pupils in science.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all lessons in Key Stage 2 provide the most able pupils with sufficient challenge
- developing and implementing an organised programme of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in science in order to identify and share the good practice that exists
- ensuring a more co-ordinated and organised approach to developing cross curricular links with literacy and numeracy in science 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector