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Mrs Caplan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Caplan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, when I visited the school on 8 November 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 students, 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

Overall standards and achievement are outstanding.

- Overall the progress made by pupils is significantly above similar schools.
- The school has been in the top 10% for achievement when compared with schools in similar contexts.
- The progress made by pupils in science has been significantly above similar schools in 2005 to 2006 and in this last year of validated data was in the top 5% of such schools.
- There was a decline in standards in science in 2007. Although all pupils attained at least Level 4 there was a reduced proportion of pupils attaining Level 5.
- Any variations in standards are identified through a thorough analysis of performance data and reasons sought for any variations.
- Standards in lessons are above the expected level for pupils' age and pupils' work is of good quality.

- Pupils' personal development is very good, and teachers have high expectations of pupils.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

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

- All the teaching observed was good and some had outstanding features.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well to have a variety of engaging activities well matched to the learning objectives.
- The good quality teaching is supported by a well developed scheme of work and a clear strategy for monitoring and evaluating standards.
- Problems and inconsistencies in practice are identified effectively and lead to the provision of relevant continuing professional development.
- Good efforts are being made to secure progression in learning through the scheme of work and to avoid unnecessary repetition of experiences.
- Assessment practice is being further developed to bring about consistency and to improve the use of assessment for learning techniques.
- Pupil self-assessment is developing well.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The scheme of work for science gives complete coverage of the National Curriculum requirements.
- There are good enrichment activities including visits to the school by individuals such as a milkman, an optician and Professor Brainstorm (a science demonstrator). Pupils also go on visits such as the Manchester Museum of Science and Technology.
- The school has engaged in a range of science based activities such as a science week, a science day and has achieved the Eco-Schools Award at bronze level.
- There are very good and developing links between subjects and with the Jewish curriculum. For example the bringing together of the celebration of Chanukah and the study of light in science; the study of the environment in science and the Mitzvahs about caring for the environment.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The senior leadership of the school is providing a good environment for the science co-ordinator to develop science.
- The long-term planning carried out by the co-ordinator has secured the coverage of the National Curriculum requirements.
- The planning for medium-term and short-term is carried out by the teaching team in each year, and this is becoming more consistent.

- Innovation by teachers in planning and teaching science is encouraged and there is currently a drive for consistency in planning and teaching.
- Ways of improving the consistency and use of assessment are being sought and an improved use of assessment for learning has been identified as a point for development.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is outstanding.

- Data describing the performance of different groups do not show significant differences between them.
- Teaching is seen to be inclusive.
- While strongly maintaining Jewish principles the teaching in science ensures that pupils have experiences of other cultures and societies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the use of assessment for learning techniques and peer and self-evaluation by pupils
- encourage more sharing of good practice by teachers engaging in peer observations
- completing the review of science documentation such as the school science policy.

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

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector