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Mr P Bolger
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bolger

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during the visit of Joy Frost HMI and myself on 29 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 yourself, the subject leader for science, and with pupils from the school council, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good, in line with your own evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in science is good. Standards vary from year-to-year, but they are often above average in science at Year 6 and are rarely less than average.

- Pupils make good progress in science in each key stage, and in acquiring knowledge and understanding of the world in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes).
- Pupils reach standards at the end of Key Stage 2 which are above average in spite of low prior attainment.
- Pupils enjoy science lessons. They work responsibly in practical lessons.

- Science lessons contribute well to pupils' personal development, although they could make an even stronger contribution; for example, by helping them develop skills of independence to a higher level.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their pupils. A lot of science is taught through practical work, which pupils particularly enjoy.
- Good use is made of interactive whiteboards and learning in science is linked well to learning in other aspects of pupils' work, such as in literacy and numeracy.
- The language particular to science is promoted well. Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils with learning difficulties, so that they achieve as well as other pupils.
- Occasionally, too much of the pupils' findings are recorded on worksheets, rather than in their own words.
- Although most lessons in science are of a practical nature, teaching does not place enough emphasis on building the skills of scientific enquiry so that pupils can work towards planning, designing, and carrying out investigations for themselves.
- Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly, so they know their levels of attainment and what they need to learn next.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- All aspects of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for science are covered, and provision in the Foundation Stage is based firmly on the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage.
- Guidance issued by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is supplemented by the use of commercial material, which is carefully selected for its interest to pupils.
- Resources for science are of high quality and enhance the quality of lessons.
- Despite the richness of the science curriculum, the school has not taken full advantage of the government's initiative to promote curriculum development within *Excellence and Enjoyment*. The curriculum gives equal weight to all aspects of the programmes of study and this leaves little time to focus investigations on those aspects of most interest and relevance to pupils.

Leadership and management of science

The leadership and management of science are outstanding.

- Strong school leadership has a clear, positive impact on science. Science is given equal weighting with English and mathematics as a core subject of the curriculum.

- The school provides an exceptionally well-ordered place in which to learn. The walls of classrooms are full of displays, including displays related to science. Routines and procedures are well understood and closely followed by pupils; for example, to ensure safety.
- Pupils' progress in science is tracked very carefully. The subject leader discusses with teachers the progress made by pupils compared with that expected. The analysis of progress leads to action where action is required.
- With minor variations, standards in science have risen steadily over the years.
- Science resources have been built up steadily and are now of very good quality.
- The subject leader is a science specialist. She provides the continuity that has enabled teaching science through practical work to develop well. The influence of her subject leadership is felt throughout the school.

Inclusion

Inclusion in science is good.

- Teachers often plan for children to work in mixed ability groups, encouraging all children to make a contribution using their different strengths.
- Teaching assistants support children with learning difficulties to ensure they have full access to science lessons, in particular, to help them record their findings.
- The teachers are sensitive to pupils' different preferred ways of learning. In lessons, they use a range of teaching and learning strategies to match the needs of all pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards further by increasing the proportion of pupils that reaches the highest level available for 11 year-olds in the national tests, Level 5
- improving pupils' skills of investigation; systematically giving pupils more opportunities to plan, prepare, execute and feedback on investigations as they progress through school.

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