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23 November 2007

Ms R Martin
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Martin

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 had been below national average for four years until it improved in 2007. Many pupils arrive at the school in the early stages of learning to speak English.
- Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 tests had been below national average, but also improved in 2007. However, attainment in science remains below average. The proportion of pupils attaining level 4 in science increased in 2007, but the proportion attaining level 5 was lower than expected.
- Pupils achieve good standards in practical in science. They enjoy the investigations and find them motivating.
- Written work is generally of a satisfactory standard with much work of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils being good.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning in science are good.

- Science lessons are well planned and there is a well thought out emphasis on scientific enquiry.
- Science lessons in Years 5 and 6 are taught by specialists. This makes effective use of staff expertise and has a beneficial effect on pupils' progress in science.
- Science resources are in good supply and used effectively in lessons.
- Teachers are confident and manage pupils' behaviour well. The children cooperate well with each other and work sensibly in class.
- Teachers ask relevant questions and allow pupils the time to think and to explain what they understand. Pupils show confidence in answering questions and use appropriate scientific vocabulary.
- In a minority of lessons the science content of investigations was not clear to the pupils, and the science was not always related to relevant everyday contexts.
- There is insufficient emphasis on stretching the most able and fully meeting the needs of the range of ability in science.
- Assessment in science is satisfactory but it is less well developed than the assessment of literacy and numeracy.
- The confidence of teachers in their knowledge and understanding of science is good overall. However, the area of forces is still an area of less confidence.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum in meeting the needs of the pupils is good.

- The science curriculum is balanced throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 and topics are well sequenced.
- There is a good emphasis on scientific enquiry and pupils are involved in a broad range of activities including investigations.
- Science programmes are well supported by a variety of enrichment activities.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The science provision is well organised and managed and encourages good teaching and an appropriate emphasis on practical work.
- Specialist resources for science are good and there is no shortage of scientific equipment for the pupils to use.
- The school science policy clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the science coordinator.
- The science co-ordinator is a well qualified enthusiast for science who effectively supports and develops the teaching of science across the school.
- Access to relevant training and development in science is good.

- The recently recast school development plan is a useful framework upon which to develop the role of science in, for instance, becoming a Healthy School or making better use of the school environment.
- The school science action plan accurately identified key areas for development.
- Flexible staffing arrangements have been effectively used. A 'floating' teacher provides teaching and learning support where needed and teachers swap classes in years 5 and 6 to enhance the science and ICT curriculum.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

- The school has seen increased numbers of children from Eastern Europe, and the Horn of Africa who have little or no English when they arrive. A good deal of time and effort are spent on support for literacy and oracy, such as effective one to one and small groups support from teaching assistants in science lessons.
- Transition from playgroups and from the family into foundation stage is good and very well organised. In addition, transition activities, in collaboration with secondary schools, are good in order to prepare Year 6 pupils for the move to secondary school.
- In science lessons good use is made of teaching assistants to enable pupils to make effective progress. A number of modern foreign languages are spoken by teachers and teaching assistants and there is no shortage of parents willing to help translate where appropriate.
- There is an ethos of support and value for the individual in this school. This can be seen in the way that pupils receive individual attention and help in their science lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards in science in national tests
- continuing to develop assessment in science
- putting more emphasis on meeting the needs of the full range of ability
- ensuring that all investigations have a clear science focus
- taking opportunities to relate science activities to contexts relevant to pupils.

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

Alex Falconer
Her Majesty's Inspector