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Mr D Iles  
Headteacher  
Richard de Clare Community Primary School  
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Dear Mr Iles

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 06 February 2008 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 you, the subject leaders for science, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work and observation of five part lessons, including a session in the Foundation Stage (Reception).

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in science is outstanding and standards are above average.

- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards science. They are challenged in their thinking about science.
- They reach above average standards in the national tests at Year 6 with a high proportion of pupils achieving beyond the national expectation.
- They achieve high standards from below average starting points when they start school. This represents outstanding achievement.
- Pupils made at least good progress in each lesson observed.
- The fundamental skills of science are built successfully in the Foundation Stage, where children observe, categorise, explore for themselves and begin to predict what may happen, such as whether a sponge will float or sink in water.

- Pupils enjoy science. It contributes to their personal development. For example, some pupils excel in science who do not excel in other subjects. Their success in science raises their self-esteem.

## Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is outstanding, overall.

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was never less than good and in some lessons was outstanding.
- Science lessons and, in the Foundation Stage, promoting children's knowledge and understanding of the world, have a high profile with teachers. A lot of thought has gone into planning lessons where pupils are active and where the learning in science is connected to that in other subjects in order that learning is more meaningful to the pupils.
- Teachers' generic skills are very good. Relationships with pupils are excellent. In all lessons teachers made very clear to children what they were to learn and how they would know they had been successful.
- The language of science was taught precisely and encouraged when pupils answered questions. Teachers made excellent use of interactive whiteboards, introducing carefully selected software programs and video clips that were highly relevant to the lesson and that added interest and variety.
- Teaching assistants made invaluable contributions to the learning of particular groups in lessons or in recording children's progress in the Foundation Stage, although in the main school they are not always available for science lessons.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is outstanding.

- The school has adopted a thoughtful and innovative approach to the science curriculum. For example, to free up time for investigations, science is taught in discrete blocks of time, with several lessons in a week. Also, teachers talk to pupils at the start of a topic, to find out what they already know and what they would like to find out. During lessons and at the end of the topic, pupils help in the assessment of what they have learned.
- The promotion of the science curriculum outside of the classroom could hardly be bettered. Science features highly in the school's extensive involvement of parents and the community. Pupils are actively involved with their parents and the teachers in family challenge events, science fairs, science weeks, within cultural events that have science aspects and through involvement in planning for the future of the school's grounds. For the greater part of the year, the school runs an extra-curricular science club.

## Leadership and management of science

The leadership and management of science are outstanding.

- You are very positive about and supportive of the development of science within the school. You provide an excellent ethos within which the science subject leaders develop their work.
- Science subject leaders have very good subject knowledge and work well together. They are determined that pupils should enjoy their science and in this aim they are successful.
- Each year, science is reviewed and an action plan constructed. The plan shows that subject leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of science and areas they wish to develop further, such as in assessment.
- Subject leaders ensure a smooth transition in science for pupils as they move from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1, and from Key Stage 1 to 2. They are actively involved in science networks outside of school.
- The subject leaders are actively seeking further improvement. For example, with the other teachers they are developing an approach to improving teaching and learning in subjects through coaching. They are also investigating how accurate assessments of younger pupils' understanding of science can be developed through observations.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in science is outstanding.

- In all lessons, teachers ensure that all pupils benefit fully from what is offered. Teachers know their pupils very well, and seek to engage all of them fully in lessons. Often, teaching assistants are instrumental in ensuring the pupils with learning difficulties have the same opportunities as other pupils to understand the science.
- Teachers recognise and praise pupils who show an aptitude for science, especially those who did not shine in the other subjects, such as English and mathematics.
- The inclusion of parents as partners in learning about science is done outstandingly effectively. The school supports learning within the family and cohesion within the community exceptionally well and raises the profile of science and of pupils' aspirations generally.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the assessment of the pupils' skills of enquiry further, sharing them with pupils and raising their importance for pupils
- increasing the time available for extended investigations by considering which aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study should be followed to develop science even further.

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