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Ms A C Kemal  
Headteacher  
Paxton Primary School  
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Dear Ms Kemal

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 February 2008 to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of science, the visit had a particular focus on transition within and between phases (F-KS1-KS2-KS3); the range of learning experiences; the status and use of SC1.

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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in science are average and achievement is good.

- Children have a good start to their science education in the nursery and reception classes. From a starting point below expectations they make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 have improved in recent years and are now broadly average.
- Standards at the end of year 6 are similar to the national average.

- Pupils make good progress in science throughout the school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning in science. They behave very well in lessons and willingly become actively involved in the tasks that are planned for them.
- The opportunities provided for pupils to work in groups develops their team working skills well. When working in groups pupils show very good awareness of the needs of others.

### Quality of teaching and learning of science

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

- Lessons are well planned around learning outcomes. Teachers make clear to pupils what they must be able to do if they are to be successful in the lesson. These strategies promote learning well.
- All teachers encourage pupils to succeed. Lessons are characterised by good relationships.
- Most lessons contain interesting activities that engage and interest pupils. This promotes pupils' enjoyment of science well.
- Teachers make good use of questioning to both check and develop pupils' learning.
- Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of science regularly through both teacher assessments and tests. A new system to assess pupils' skills of scientific enquiry has recently been developed but has not yet been fully implemented.
- Most work is marked with helpful comments that give pupils advice about how to improve.
- Pupils have little opportunity to assess the quality of their own work or reflect on their own developing understanding of ideas and concepts in science.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum is well planned and covers the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- A commercial science scheme is well adapted by teachers to ensure that it meets the broad range of children's needs within the school.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of scientific enquiry are well integrated into schemes of work.
- Information communication technology (ICT) is being increasingly used in the school to promote learning. However, the full potential of ICT to promote and develop learning in science is not yet being fully exploited.
- The school provides pupils with a range of science related trips and activities that enrich their learning experience.

## Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- Good self evaluation procedures are in place to assess the quality of provision and outcomes in science.
- Both you and the science co-ordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in science. A regular self evaluation document is provided for governors.
- The science development plan identifies the right priorities but the success criteria are not sufficiently specific or measurable.
- Pupils' progress in science is tracked centrally. The co-ordinator analyses these data to identify pupils who are underachieving. Targeted support is then provided for these pupils.
- The smooth transition of pupils through the school is aided by the good assessment records that follow pupils as they move from one class to another.
- Good links exist with local secondary schools. However, a specific science transition project is not currently in place.

## Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is outstanding.

- The school has a welcoming, inclusive ethos in which all children learn well in science.
- Careful consideration is given to the organisation of groups of pupils in lessons and the teaching strategies employed in order to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the science curriculum.
- Teaching assistants give pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very good support in lessons. Effective extra help is also given to those pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- All groups of pupils are well supported, carefully tracked and make good progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that pupils have greater opportunity to assess their own work and reflect on their own developing understanding of scientific ideas and concepts
- fully implementing the recently developed assessment system to track the development of pupils' skills of scientific enquiry
- ensuring that greater use is made of ICT within science lessons to promote pupils' learning.

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