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Mrs J Sjovoll  
Headteacher  
Framwellgate School Durham  
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Dear Mrs Sjovoll

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff when I visited the school on 12-13 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 staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of parts of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Overall standards are well above the national average and achievement is good.

- For the three years 2005-2007 standards at the end of Year 9 have been significantly above the national average.
- Data concerning the progress made by students in Key Stage 3 is less positive, but current performance data gathered by the school indicates that achievement of students is now good.
- There has been a turn over of teaching staff in excess of 60% since 2005. The school has focused appropriately on providing stability for students following GCSE and post-16 courses.
- Students in Key Stage 3 experienced the most disruption, but lesson observations and work scrutiny show that students are making at least good progress in the large majority of cases.

- Data describing progress in Key Stage 4 show positive achievement of students with 77% of them gaining at least two grade Cs in science subjects in 2006.
- While there was a dip in performance at GCSE in 2007 the tracking system and lesson observations show a clear upward trend in students' performance in 2008.
- Students' behaviour is good and they show good personal development and take on responsibilities well when given the opportunity to do so.

### Quality of teaching and learning of science

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

- The large majority of teaching seen was good or better and no teaching was less than satisfactory.
- Lessons are well planned and provide a good range of learning activities where students are expected to be active.
- Many lesson plans set out explicit strategies for engaging and including the full range of students present.
- Students show developing skills of independent learning. They work well and safely in practical sessions, and collaborate well in group activities.
- Students show good attitudes to learning and are usually keen to offer answers to questions and to participate fully in lessons.
- Students describe very positively the support and guidance they receive from teachers both in lessons and in extra-curricular time.
- The students describe how much of the science is set in relevant contexts. They also say how much they enjoy science practical work, and that they appreciate how effective it is in helping them to learn.
- Assessments at the end of units of work are systematically carried out and well recorded. The schemes of work and assessment data show that assessment for learning tasks are used and these are allowing students to evaluate their work.
- There was little evidence in lessons of teachers using formative assessment techniques to engage classes and evaluate their learning.
- In many cases students are receiving effective written formative comment to help them improve, but this is not yet consistent across the department.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Courses provided in Key Stage 3 and 4 are well planned and ensure coverage of National Curriculum requirements.
- The curriculum pathways created for students aged 14-19 provide a good series of options to meet the needs of all groups of students.
- The good breadth of options includes single science, double award science, the three separate sciences and vocational options.
- The GCSE courses continue to be developed, for example, to enrich some GCSE courses with more extensive experiences of 'How Science Works'.

- Plans are well in hand for the introduction of the new Key Stage 3 programme of study in September 2008.
- A few links to other areas of knowledge are made explicit in the schemes of work but this is not so regarding opportunities for students to experience spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- While teachers show a concern for developing scientific vocabulary, opportunities to develop broader literacy in the context of science are not identified in planning.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular science activities that provide good opportunities for enrichment.

## Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The school has successfully reapplied for specialist science college status and has a very clear vision of how it should develop.
- The senior leadership team, working in collaboration with the director of science, carries out very thorough analysis of performance data to enable the identification of success and areas for improvement.
- The self-evaluation carried out in the science directorate is of outstanding quality and the areas for development derive rationally from the evaluation.
- The science directorate has a team of well qualified teachers who collaborate well to provide for the students.
- Strategies for monitoring and evaluation are well established, and there is a good range of well-targeted professional development using internal and external sources.
- Further promotion of good practice in teaching and learning is being considered through peer observations by science teachers.
- The school has strong relationships with the Science Learning Centre North East and this enhances the provision of continuing professional development.
- The science directorate plays a significant part in the Training School programmes. Trainees speak positively of the high quality support and training they receive in science.

## Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is good.

- Lesson observations demonstrated that different groups are given equal opportunities to learn.
- The school is monitoring the performance of different groups, such as boys and girls, to ensure their provision is inclusive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use of assessment for learning techniques to promote the engagement of students and better evaluate learning
- enriching some of the GCSE courses with greater experiences of 'How Science Works'

- developing students' involvement in assessment of their learning and that of fellow students.

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