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Miss J Hart
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Dear Miss Hart

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 February 2008 to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, 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 analysis of data, interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are about average.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in science.
- In 2007 at Key Stage 2, most pupils achieved at least level 4. The proportion achieving level 5 was below the national average. Pupils generally achieve the levels they are capable of given their starting points and circumstances.
- Behaviour observed in lessons and around school was good.
- Science lessons contribute well to pupils' personal development.
- Attendance is above average.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Lessons are well planned.
- Teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards.
- Lessons include a good range of activities which pupils enjoy.
- Some good use of group discussions was observed.
- In question and answer sessions teachers sometimes do not give enough emphasis to use of correct terminology, or ask further probing questions to help deepen understanding.
- Good use is made of investigative and experimental work.
- Pupils are encouraged to think about their own predictions and to test these.
- Older pupils know the levels they are aiming to achieve.
- In the lessons observed the pace of learning was generally set by a teacher-led, whole class approach.
- There is insufficient emphasis on the development of scientific literacy in lessons.
- There are regular formal assessments.
- The marking of pupils' books rarely makes direct reference to individual targets, and specific guidance on how to improve work is not consistently offered.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- Good use is made of practical and experimental work which promotes enjoyment of science.
- Occasional visits, for example to a local field centre, enhance learning in science.
- Some relevant curricular links are made between science and other subjects.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively in groups in science. These are well managed and promote development of social skills.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- Teachers use an appropriate range of resources for science.
- Day to day management of science is effective.
- The science coordinator maintains exemplary records and documentation which are particularly well organised.
- The coordinator monitors provision in science, for example through monitoring of planning and work scrutiny. Helpful suggestions to teachers are made as a result.
- A particularly good feature of the work of the coordinator is the introduction of pupil focus groups.

- There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in science.
- The school's own self evaluation accurately identifies the proportions of children attaining the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as an area for development.
- There has been relatively little science professional development, but two sessions are planned for the whole teaching staff later this term.

Inclusion

The school's approach to inclusion in science is satisfactory.

- Data suggest that most groups of pupils perform similarly.
- Teaching assistants provide appropriate support in lessons.
- There are plans to introduce setting in science for some Key Stage 2 pupils to better meet the needs of pupils of different abilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introducing observations of science lessons as a tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning in science
- increasing the focus on scientific vocabulary and terminology in lessons in both question and answer sessions and written work
- providing more opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills in science through more extended writing tasks.

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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector