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Mr M Pearman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pearman

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on to look at work in science on Wednesday 30 January 2008.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with you, discussions with senior staff and heads of department, observation of two lessons, scrutiny of documents and scrutiny of pupils' work.

Features of good practice observed

- Pupils are making excellent progress during Key Stage 3 such that pupils' achievement in national tests is in the top 5% of schools.
- The leadership and management in science are outstanding, and the team of science teachers work well collaboratively to provide pupils with good quality science education.
- Pupils in interview make it clear that they very much appreciate the enthusiasm and hard work of their teachers who they believe are nothing less than good and often outstanding.
- The support that teachers give extends well beyond the classroom. Pupils describe how they can always approach their teachers for help and how they always get a positive response.
- Teachers are well qualified specialists who teach their subjects with enthusiasm and skill.
- The refurbishing of laboratories and the installation of interactive whiteboards have created a very positive environment for learning science
- There is a systematic approach to assessment across Key Stage 3 that involves all staff using detailed criteria and also setting clear targets to guide improvement.

- The rigorous assessment system and high staff expectation combine to promote learning. Pupils know how well they are doing and recognise the vigilance of staff that ensures they complete the work set.
- The good emphasis given to scientific enquiry is promoting pupils' engagement and interest. Pupils describe such work as one of the features of science that they enjoy most.
- Information and communication technology is being used more and is helping pupils to learn well, especially when it is used interactively.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards in GCSE physics and biology to align with the high attainment in chemistry
- bringing consistency to marking pupils work across the science subjects, such that pupils receive feedback of the same quality in the same way using a common grading and mark system.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector