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Mr A Yates
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Yates

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with my colleague Terry Holland on 4 February 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 without their consent.

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

Features of good practice observed

- You and your senior leadership team have a clear and purposeful vision for science in the school and for the continuing implementation and development of science within its specialist status in engineering. This sees engineering as broad 'discipline' underpinned by problem solving rather than a constrained set of conventional manufacturing and material processes. That vision is very effectively focussed on making it possible for every student to be successful in science.
- This clarity of purpose is shared by the head of science, who provides outstanding leadership and management in science and sets good examples of effectiveness and teaching.
- The school interrogates performance data well and can show how well students are making progress. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate.

- The value added measure of achievement in science is very high, giving evidence that students' achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 is around the top ten percent of schools nationally.
- The strong focus on personalised learning has underpinned rational planning to provide individuals with the best opportunities for learning in science.
- There is a clear belief in the importance of a continuum in learning, evidenced by good arrangements for transition between key stages and a systematic approach to assessment, monitoring and target setting.
- The curriculum is outstanding in the plethora of pathways provided for students. In interview the students described the very good support and guidance they receive in making choices of course and in their studies.
- Students from all key stages expressed high levels of confidence in teachers, describing the quality of teaching as often outstanding and never less than good. The lessons observed confirmed this.
- The science taught is well contextualised in modern world settings. Students are engaged well in science and are strongly motivated by the science enquiry and practical work in their courses.
- The school deploys staff effectively, and from Year 10 onwards students are taught individual science subjects by subject specialists. Students describe vividly the enthusiasm and energy of teachers, and their willingness to help students with problems outside classes.
- The virtual learning environment that continues to develop is well organised and much appreciated by students. They have no problems accessing ICT, and independent learning is being encouraged well.
- The appointment of a teaching and learning coordinator, based in science, is a key move in promoting improvements in teaching and learning across the school. Leading edge innovations such as podcasts and use of MP3 players in learning are developing well.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- no significant areas for development that the school has not already identified.

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