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Mrs L Burnley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Burnley

Ofsted 2007-08 survey inspection programme - Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 March 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are around the national average.

- Standards are about average. At Key Stage 2 the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level in national tests was close to the national average in 2007.
- Achievement in science is good. Pupils arrive in the school with levels of knowledge and skills well below those typically found in children of their

age. They make good progress and they leave with about average attainment.

- Most pupils have good attitudes to learning, and are keen to participate.
- Science lessons provide excellent opportunities for pupils' personal development. They help to develop social skills, and promote self-esteem.
- Behaviour observed in lessons was generally good.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are good.

- Lessons include a good range of activities to interest and motivate pupils.
- Teachers are firm, clear and authoritative, but also very encouraging and supportive. They have good relationships with their pupils.
- Teachers make very effective use of class management strategies. This fosters the good attitudes shown by most pupils.
- Teachers' explanations are clear.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on scientific vocabulary. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to talk about their ideas in science lessons, and to develop confidence in using scientific terminology.
- Good use is made of interactive whiteboards in lessons.
- Teachers share learning objectives and success criteria in lessons, and these aid pupils' learning.
- Pupils are beginning to be involved in assessing their own and others' learning.
- Teachers' marking is of variable quality. Praise is used well, but some marking does not give enough guidance on how pupils can improve their work.
- Some good use is made of question and answer sessions in lessons.
- Regular formal assessments are used to monitor progress against targets.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- The Foundation Stage curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of the world.
- An appropriate emphasis is given to scientific investigation. Pupils are encouraged to make their own predictions and older pupils understand the principles of fair testing.
- In lessons there are plenty of opportunities for practical hands on activities.
- Enhancement opportunities include activities such as pond dipping at a local outdoor education centre, and visitors who give science demonstrations.
- Appropriate links are sought with other aspects of the curriculum.
- There are good opportunities for pupils' personal development through science. For example, in one lesson pupils used a range of methods to present a summary of what they had learned to the rest of the class.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- You have provided strong support for science in the school
- Leadership and management have a clear focus on raising achievement. There is a strong commitment to raising the aspirations and self esteem of the pupils, many of whom have disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The school analyses performance data carefully, and this has led to improvements such as the moderation of Key Stage 1 assessments.
- Day-to-day operational management is highly effective.
- Transitions between key stages are managed well.
- A recent audit of science resources has led to additional equipment and information and communication technology (ICT) resources being purchased, and this has increased the range of activities in science lessons.
- There has been some monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in science through lessons observations.
- A new science coordinator took over her role in January 2008, and is beginning to undertake some monitoring of planning.
- Teamwork is strong, and there is much informal collaboration amongst the staff to the benefit of pupils.
- The school encourages teachers to undertake professional development and several have taken up opportunities in science, particularly courses offered by the local authority.

Inclusion

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

- There is good inclusion of pupils with a wide range of different needs, including many from very disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The home-school liaison officer provides a valuable link between home and school for some families.
- Teachers know their pupils well and plan lessons carefully to meet the range of needs.
- Some classes are small which enables teachers to give particularly good individual attention to those most in need of it.
- Teaching assistants provide appropriate support in lessons.
- Effective adult support promotes the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the Foundation Stage, and enables children to make rapid progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- seeking more opportunities to develop literacy skills through science

- further developing the marking of pupils' work so that comments focus more on how pupils can improve
- continuing to develop and implement strategies to improve attendance.

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