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Mr P Jackson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Jackson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 - 14 May 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: analysis of data, interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards are very high compared with the national average and achievement is very good.

- At Key Stage 3 in 2007 over 90% of pupils attained level 5 or above, two thirds attained level 6 or above and over one third attained level 7.
- Data which take account of students' starting points and contextual factors show that during Key Stage 3 students consistently make very good progress.
- GCSE results are also very good. In 2007 in the separate subjects of biology, chemistry and physics over 60% of students gained grades A or A\* and all gained A\* -C.
- The A\*-C pass rate for GCSE double science in 2007 was well above national average, as was the proportion of students achieving A and A\* grades.
- Comparison of the GCSE grades students achieve in double science with their other subjects shows that overall there is no significant difference.

However, girls do not do quite as well as boys in this respect. School analyses show that this is the result of a very small number of female students achieving a lower than expected grade.

- In the associated sixth form pass rates for GCE AS and A level science subjects are very high. High proportions of students achieve A and B grades.
- Value added data show that overall students do better at GCE AS and A level than would be expected on the basis of their GCSE grades.
- Students' personal development through science is good. Students respond positively to opportunities to work independently, and to work in teams.

## Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in science are good.

- Teachers are committed, hard working and enthusiastic. Their subject knowledge is very good.
- Lessons are well planned and structured.
- A good range of activities is used to engage students' interest and involve them actively in their own learning.
- Learning materials such as worksheets are effective. They are clearly laid out and designed to help students to think about concepts and apply their knowledge.
- Good use is made of practical activities, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Some limited use was made of information and communications technology in the lessons observed.
- The school website includes a range of relevant materials to support science teaching. There is a particularly wide range of useful and relevant links to other websites for physics.
- Teachers questioning techniques are effective in helping students to recall prior knowledge, actively involving students and encouraging them to think.
- Some effective use is made of individual targets, particularly amongst older students.
- There were some good opportunities for personal development in the lessons observed. For example, students worked cooperatively in teams measuring speed.
- Assessment in science is good. Students are assessed regularly in science and teachers use the data well.
- Students reported that they enjoy using peer review as one method of assessment.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The range of courses offered at Key Stage 4 meets a wide range of needs. Courses include core science, additional science, additional applied science and triple science (physics, chemistry and biology).

- Triple science provides a particularly good preparation for those wishing to pursue GCE A level sciences, and the numbers opting for this are increasing.
- There is an appropriate range of enrichment activities.
- In the associated sixth form there is a good range of science courses. GCE applied science is offered as well as biology, chemistry and physics. There are also other courses relevant to those with an interest in science such as health and social care and engineering.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Day-to-day operational management is highly effective.
- Teachers have worked hard to ensure the success of the new GCSE science courses introduced in September 2006.
- Teachers are deployed to teach within their subject specialisms wherever possible, and students value this.
- The school development plan includes specific actions related to the GCSE results, focusing on improving Key Stage 4 science outcomes even further.
- The science self evaluation provides a sound summary of strengths and weaknesses in science.
- The head of department carries out thorough analyses of relevant data and examination results, and uses these to identify areas for development.
- Leaders and managers have very good awareness of the key issues for science and a clear focus on maximising the progression to GCSE of students who achieve level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3.
- There is very good progression from Key Stage 4 to the sixth form.
- Some of the laboratories are slightly dilapidated and do not provide a modern scientific learning environment. This is recognised and there is an ongoing programme for refurbishment.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in science is good.

- There is appropriate in-class support from teaching assistants for those with additional learning needs.
- Students report that teachers are friendly and approachable. Students are confident about asking for help which is readily given.
- Additional help, such as extra revision sessions and additional coursework guidance, is given to students who need it to help ensure that they attain their target grades.
- Although parts of the school building are not accessible to those with mobility difficulties, the school does make appropriate adjustments to accommodate the needs of individual students with specific needs.
- Sixth form students spoke positively about their tutorial system and the support they receive, both from tutors and science subject teachers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing further strategies to meet the needs of those who attain Level 5 in science at Key Stage 3 in order to increase the proportion who achieve grade C at GCSE
- implementing plans to refurbish those laboratories which are older and which are slightly dilapidated
- continuing to develop strategies to improve the already good teaching and learning in science to support the school's drive to raise achievement even further.

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