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Mrs O'Brien
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs O'Brien

Ofsted survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 June 2008 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: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in science are good.

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils talk about their understanding and knowledge of the subject very well, although they do this less effectively when they write about the subject.
- Pupils' scientific enquiry skills are good, though not quite so good as their knowledge of the subject. Older pupils are sometimes confused over predictions and hypotheses.
- In science it is evident that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well above average (despite writing being less developed than speaking) and

their information and communication technology skills (ICT) are also above average. They are very well prepared for their future economic well being.

- Children in reception exceed expectations in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Their ICT skills are good and they talk confidently.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding in science. Their contribution to the community is extensive. They are involved in environmental activities in the school and wider community, they consider the impact of human behaviour in, for example, producing too much waste, overeating and not turning lights out. They eat very healthily and engage in physical activity.
- They have very good social skills and work together with respect for each other's ideas and with consideration in practical work.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Lessons are generally challenging and well organised, with opportunities for investigations and discussion that help reinforce pupils' learning.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use ICT resources well and ensure pupils use them well too.
- Almost all lessons have clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils. However, occasionally learning objectives tell pupils what they are going to find out which spoils the sense of discovery.
- Assessment information is used effectively to plan work to meet pupils' needs and to make sure that teaching materials are pitched at the right levels to help pupils learn well.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to write about their knowledge and understanding, partly because of the occasional overuse of worksheets.
- Scientific enquiry principles are well used in investigations and pupils have to consider 'what if?' and 'why?' questions regularly. Occasionally pupils' own ideas for investigations are not valued enough and the teacher's approach is superimposed on those of pupils.
- Teachers and learning assistants provide very good intervention and support and contribute effectively to making sure that all pupils achieve well.
- Marking varies considerably and does not always give a clear picture of how well pupils are doing or how they could improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The science National Curriculum is fully covered. The principles of enquiry are well established where there are planned investigative activities, but not so thoroughly in other activities.

- The curriculum is well organised to include activities planned to meet the needs of pupils, though opportunities for pupils to write at length to show their understanding are limited.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. There are environmental activities, visits to several local field centres to look at, for example, pond life, fungi, speed of water flow, and town planning issues involved with planting in parks. The school grounds are used well to support science provision.
- The Foundation Stage curriculum is well organised. Teacher-led activities lead into activities initiated by children in which they apply skills and try to solve problems set by adults.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- The school has identified the main areas for improvement and provided support for staff. The identified areas for improvement are being addressed slowly.
- Links with secondary schools are good, ensuring pupils acquire some familiarity with staff and the demands of secondary schools. Links within school are sound overall. They are good between the Foundation Stage and Year 1 with exchange of extensive information to ensure pupils settle readily into Key Stage 1 work.
- The school provides considerable support for the subject, mostly from the senior management team, and more than it does for other subjects. This is not an efficient use of personnel. Nevertheless, the effect is that provision is good and pupils achieve well and frequently very well.
- The range of training and professional development undertaken by staff is broadly satisfactory. The school makes sound use of local authority support.

The areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing opportunities for pupils to write about their understanding and knowledge, and therefore reducing the use of worksheets
- ensuring that marking consistently informs pupils about how well they do in science and gives them guidance on what they need to do to improve
- making sure that the principles of scientific enquiry permeate all science lessons
- developing a leadership and management structure for science that is less dependent on the support of the school senior management team.

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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley
Additional Inspector