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Mr A Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 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 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 students' work.

Features of good practice observed

- Students' attainment in science continues to be good. Both at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE their achievements are consistently above national averages.
- Leadership and management in science are good. The team is well organised and the staff work well together to plan courses and interesting investigations for the students.
- Science teachers are well qualified specialists who show enthusiasm and expertise in their subjects.
- Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are key strengths of the science department and have improved over the past three years. Students' work is regularly and rigorously assessed and the results recorded centrally. These developments are part of a whole school focus on assessment and monitoring in order to improve support and intervention to aid students' progress.

- The science team attributes recent improvements in Key Stage 3 science results to more effective assessment and better feedback to students.
- Students value the efforts of their science teachers and speak confidently about the targets they are set following assessments. They make it clear that the support they receive from science teachers is a key factor in the progress they make.
- All laboratories are equipped with digital projectors and electronic whiteboards which are used effectively by teachers. The department has a good supply of specialist resources.
- Scientific investigations and practical work are well integrated into teaching and learning. The students are engaged and enthused by this approach.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- raising the standard of girls attainment at GCSE to match that of the boys
- developing more access to ICT for students in science lessons.

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

Alex Falconer
Her Majesty's Inspector