

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 October 2008

Mrs J Koops
Headteacher
Town Farm Primary School
St Mary's Crescent
Stanwell
Staines, Middlesex
TW19 7HU

Dear Mrs Koops

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 September 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 tracking the impact of recent initiatives and to investigate the need for future developments.

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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory and standards in science are at recent national averages.

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 has been around national averages for the past four years with a slight downward trend. Pupils enter the school with relatively low speaking and listening skills and the school works hard to overcome this.
- Boys do not perform quite as well as girls at Key Stage 1 and those with English as a second language and those who receive free school meals also make less sure progress.

- At Key Stage 2 the attainment of pupils declined slightly over the period from 2005 to 2007. However, in 2008 the proportion achieving Level 5 or better in science was 53%, an improvement on previous years and above national average.
- Overall, the progress pupils make in their science lessons is satisfactory. Both girls and boys and groups analysed by ethnicity and by ability make similar progress.
- Standards of work in class are good and pupils enjoy science and record their findings with enthusiasm. Their behaviour is good and they cooperate well with each other and listen attentively to instructions.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

Teaching and learning are good.

- Four lessons were observed; three were judged to be good and one satisfactory.
- Teachers are confident and prepare their science lessons effectively. They use information and communication technology (ICT) well and resources for investigations are thoughtfully prepared and set out.
- The beginnings of lessons are particularly good and in all the observed lessons, question and answer and short starter activities help to focus pupils' minds on their learning objectives.
- Practical work is well managed and provides the pupils with interesting activities to help them develop understanding. For example, a circulation game, which actively involved all the members of a Year 5 class, was carried out with good humour and enjoyment, whilst effectively illustrating the function of the lungs, heart and blood vessels.
- Good use is made of small group practical work and, in a successful lesson, Year 2 pupils stretched, bent and squeezed a variety of common objects in order to investigate their physical properties.
- Occasionally, however, some activities are less successfully planned than others. They can be too easy and pupils are not quite sure if they have done and observed all that is necessary.
- Assessment is good. Teachers are confident about the progress their pupils are making and monitoring data is kept up to date and is recorded centrally. However, assessment for learning is still developing.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum is broad and balanced and allows all pupils access to the National Curriculum programmes of study. The scheme of work for science is good and has been modified from that developed by the local authority science advisor.
- Pupils responded positively when asked about science. They particularly enjoy working with each other in practical work and find the range of topics interesting and fun.

- Enrichment in science is good. "Cuddle me do" farm successfully visits Foundation and Key Stage 1 pupils each year in order to let pupils have first hand experience of domesticated animals and their life cycles. In addition, a planetarium visits each year, there is an annual science week and pupils visit the River Thames Explorer and local lakes.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- Science is well led and the science coordinator is well qualified and enthusiastic. In addition, two other teachers have science qualifications to degree level.
- Resources for science are good and well organised so that teachers can easily access specialist equipment and topic activities.
- Continuing professional development is well organised so that teachers can update their knowledge and understanding of science topics.
- The local authority science advisor has been instrumental in helping the school develop the science curriculum and to respond to initiatives such as the national strategies.
- The school is successfully developing home-school links. Parents have responded positively by attending presentations by the pupils during science week. Managers are keen to make sure that pupils' aspirations are raised in order to improve standards.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising attainment in science
- making sure that all science activities are well planned and meet pupils' needs
- continuing to develop assessment for learning.

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

Alex Falconer
Her Majesty's Inspector