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Mrs S Abrahams
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Abrahams

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 October to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of science, the visit had a particular focus on transition within and between phases; 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 interviews with you and the science subject leader, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good with some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Standards are above the national average. Achievement is good overall.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been above national average overall for the three years 2005-2007 from the last set of validated data. In 2006 standards were significantly above average. Disruption to teaching from 2006 has contributed to a decline in standards attained in subsequent years.
- The progress that pupils make is good. The scrutiny of their work and observation of lessons showed that they are working above levels expected for their age.

- Pupils are demonstrating understanding of science and well developed science skills that they are using to solve problems.
- Pupils work well whether in class, in groups, individually and independently. They take on responsibilities and roles readily. Their personal development is good as is their behaviour.
- As part of the creative curriculum the pupils are responding positively to the greater opportunities provided to transfer skills to new areas of knowledge.
- Pupils' skills of scientific enquiry are well developed. They are working with confidence and are very willing to offer ideas and answers to questions.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall.

- The teaching seen was at least good and much was outstanding. The skill and enthusiasm of teachers promotes high levels of engagement and enjoyment. No examples of off task activity were seen in lessons.
- Teachers expect pupils to be active, to take decisions, plan, contribute to discussions and offer ideas such as predictions and what constitutes a fair test in science.
- The resources used by teachers are of high quality and their use of information communication technology (ICT) enhances the teaching and learning well, making it possible for pupils to benefit from good stimulus material and to interact with ideas using ICT.
- Teachers' planning is very good, well matched to individual needs and much of the work is set in contexts that are relevant to pupils. The planning model ensures that knowledge and skills in science are developed along with other key skills and with clear relevant links to other subject areas.
- Assessment is thorough and pupils' progress is effectively monitored. The monitoring identifies individual needs and leads to changes in the planning for pupils. Assessment for learning techniques are well deployed to promote pupils' learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum provided is outstanding.

- You have adopted a model for the creative curriculum. This is well understood and put into practice by teachers. The curriculum model is promoting good development of skills and greater enjoyment for pupils and teachers.
- The coverage of the National Curriculum is secured by thorough audit of planning against the qualifications and curriculum authority (QCA) scheme of work. A clear priority of teachers is for pupils to study science in relevant contexts and to ensure engaging experiences and the use of the skills of scientific enquiry. Pupils are very positive about how this helps them to learn effectively.

- The curriculum is enriched and extended by visits out of school, visitors to school, such as the Quantum Theatre, and extracurricular clubs such as the Eco-club.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are outstanding.

- You have generated a climate for strong innovation and coherent planning, within which science is flourishing.
- There is thorough monitoring of standards and progress made by pupils that enables the needs of individuals to be met.
- Planning is effectively monitored and very good efforts made to provide pupils with a continuum of learning experiences.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work, observation and evaluation of teaching, canvassing learners' views, careful analysis of performance data, all contribute to an accurate self evaluation of the work in science.
- The subject is exceptionally well organised and teachers feel very well supported and guided by the subject leader. Day to day management is of a very high standards and policies and documentation supporting coherent practice and very good communication are in place.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring access to high quality and relevant continuing professional development in science for staff.

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

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector