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Mr P Scott
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Scott

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with George Falconer HMI on 23 September 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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards are higher than the national average. Achievement is good.

- Children enter the school with below average attainment. By the end of Key Stage 2 they have made progress in science which is significantly above the expected.
- Pupils have good opportunities to make decisions, carry out investigations and work independently. As a consequence they participate well in lessons and achieve well.

- The pace of progress is very good in the early years of the school where teaching and learning are focused on the development of key skills and a clear vision of a coherent and well-coordinated curriculum.
- The good standards and high achievement are matched by good personal development. Pupils take responsibilities, work collaboratively and show good behaviour.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Teachers' relationships with pupils are good and pupils demonstrate high levels of trust in their teachers. Teachers are providing well resourced and varied learning experiences for their pupils.
- Different groups in the school are seen to be achieving well and none are disadvantaged.
- More examples of independent learning and pupils making decisions were seen in the lower school, and the pace of learning was higher in these lessons. Scientific enquiry is rightly at the heart of much of the science in the school.
- In a minority of lessons, where learning was less active, teachers and teaching assistants were directing pupils too much. In the best lessons teachers were seen to work alongside pupils promoting pupils' thinking well.
- In a few lessons pupils were not sufficiently encouraged to reflect on what they observed or found out.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and no misconceptions were seen to be taught. They give accurate information and the materials they use with pupils are of high quality.
- Good use of information communication technology (ICT) was seen for a range of purposes, such as, presenting information, displaying outcomes and measuring using electronic sensors.
- Systems are being developed for consistent assessment as they are for pupil peer and self assessment. The school is working on improving the quality of assessment practice, for example, marking and the quality of information pupils receive to help them improve.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum provided is good.

- Curriculum change to move to a more skills based and 'collapsed', well co-ordinated curriculum is in process.
- Key skill development is becoming the main focus and has been introduced in the lower school, and this development is being introduced higher up the school.
- The interconnectivity between subjects through planning around identified key skills is helping pupils to operate with confidence in a range of contexts.
- There is good incorporation of ICT, literacy and numeracy into science based work.

- There is good provision for extra-curricular activities that include experiences targeted at gifted and talented pupils and clubs such as 'Junior Sparkies'.
- Teachers' enhanced perception of curriculum possibilities is promoted by involvement in a research project on the creative curriculum and membership of the excellence cluster.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The school has carried out accurate and detailed self evaluation that demonstrates good analysis of data and which underpins a rational approach to improvement.
- There is a clear vision for the development of science within the context of whole school development. Development planning is good.
- While there is some monitoring of standards by analysis of data, other methods are underdeveloped. Systematic work scrutiny and monitoring and evaluation through teaching observations would promote greater consistency and aid sharing of good practice.
- Planning is secure with sound long term planning guiding effectively the work of year teams in making their medium and short term plans.
- Teachers feel well guided and supported, while recognising the freedom they have to plan for the specific needs of their pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing a more consistent approach to assessment and improving the quality of feedback to pupils
- monitoring and evaluating science teaching in a systematic way to ensure pupils are receiving the science education they deserve.

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