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Ms K Allan
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Dear Ms Allan

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 24 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

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

- Pupils enter the school well below the expected level and by the end of Key Stage 2 the standards are around the national average. This evidences good achievement.
- The school is aware of some girls' underachievement at the end of Key Stage 2 and they are reviewing the provision to improve this situation.
- The Foundation Stage is providing pupils with a strong basis for further learning higher up the school.

- Standards seen in science lessons are at least satisfactory and good progress is seen to be made by the majority of pupils.
- There is an increased focus on standards and achievement in science this year which includes closer monitoring of lessons.
- Pupils' personal development is good as evidenced by their good behaviour and the positive ways they take responsibility for their work and collaborate with others.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- The best teaching seen was associated with pupils making decisions, planning and evaluating the work they do.
- In some lessons teaching and learning were only satisfactory because of over-direction by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Planning is good and, in the main, provides a range of activities to engage all pupils. Lessons are usually well paced and appropriate to the needs of pupils.
- The resources used in teaching and the management of learning areas are good.
- There is good use of information communication technology (ICT) for a range of purposes including display, and independent learning.
- There are good strategies for assessment, including assessment for learning but this is not consistently carried out.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and treat them with care and respect. This contributes to the good levels of application and behaviour of pupils.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum provided is good.

- The provision in science meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Scientific enquiry rightly is the focus of much of the work in science.
- Science is taught in contexts relevant to pupils and well related to other areas of learning. These cross-curricular connections are being developed as part of a renewed vision for the curriculum which centres on the development of key skills.
- The curriculum is, on the whole, well matched to pupils' needs. In a few classes the work was not sufficiently differentiated.
- ICT plays a significant part in the learning experiences of pupils and science is used well as a context for developing skills in ICT, numeracy and literacy.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- There are clear documents guiding developments in science.

- Good long term planning provides a framework for class teachers to plan their science lessons at medium and short terms.
- The senior leadership has initiated a programme of reform to develop the 'creative curriculum', the focus of which is for science and all other subjects developing good learners.
- Planning for science is increasingly focused on the development of key skills and the skills of scientific enquiry permeate much of the work in science.
- Positive developments include the refinement of assessment systems, improving consistency on in such matters as marking to provide pupils with the information they need to improve.
- Monitoring and evaluation of lessons have been underdeveloped in science because of the focus on mathematics and English. A main focus in the school development plan is the implementation of monitoring in science.

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