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Sister S Collins
Headteacher
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Dear Sister Collins

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 October to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject/aspect, the visit had a particular focus on transition within and between phases (F-KS1-KS2-KS3); 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 staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons and the garden area.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards are higher than the national average and pupils achieve well.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with skills below those expected for their age and they make good progress as they move through the school.
- Progress is very good in the Reception class because children are encouraged to make observations, express their own ideas and to try out things for themselves.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils learn how to express their scientific understanding well because there are many opportunities to discuss and write about the work they do.

- Scientific enquiry skills are satisfactory and improving but have not reached the same level as other aspects of the subject because pupils do not investigate their own ideas or take responsibility for planning their own enquiry activities enough.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They work well together and independently. In practical work they behave safely and with regard for each other. They are enthusiastic, confident.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide a wide range of interesting and challenging activities in most lessons.
- Work is well matched to the wide range of learning needs and introduced to pupils in ways that encourages their involvement.
- Assessment is good and used well to match work to pupils' needs and to set pupils' targets. Marking, for the most part, gives pupils guidance on how to reach targets.
- Opportunities for writing, speaking, calculating, measuring and using computers are well established, ensuring pupils develop good basic skills.
- Relationships are very good and this means that pupils are ready to participate in discussion confidently.
- Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for planning and conducting their own scientific enquiry activities are limited but improving. Teachers direct activities too much and although pupils cooperate willingly, their grasp of scientific enquiry processes is less secure than their knowledge and understanding.

Quality of the curriculum

The science curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is well planned to provide opportunities for enquiry activities.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is well integrated into the curriculum and there are many opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT).
- The links between subjects are good and deliberately planned to make the curriculum relevant to pupils.
- The range of visits and other activities to make the curriculum interesting is good, and pupils enjoy them. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. A particular feature is the Garden Club which helps engage some pupils with limited social skills whilst providing opportunities to further strengthen links with parents.
- Links with secondary schools are good, providing for the use of specialist equipment, specialist teachers and visits to secondary schools that help pupils transfer to the next stage of their education smoothly. Links between different stages within the school are also good, providing for smooth movement between classes and teachers being fully informed about the progress and learning difficulties of each pupil.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The school has a clear picture of the strengths and areas for improvement needed in science. In particular, the perception of the need to work with all staff to improve scientific enquiry is good. A wide range of evidence is used to evaluate provision in science and to plan improvements.
- The subject is well organised with a sharp focus on supporting staff. The quality of professional development is good and well planned to meet all staff needs.
- You support the subject leader well, as does the numeracy subject leader.

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/Local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley
Additional Inspector