

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr S Martin
Headteacher
Conisbrough Station Road Primary School
Station Road
Conisbrough
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN12 3DB

Dear Mr Martin

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 January 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards are above the national average. Achievement is good.

- No validated performance data for Key Stage 2 were available during the inspection. However, the school's own detailed records of assessments, including national tests, scrutiny of pupils' work and classroom observations show that standards are above the national average.
- Year on year variations in standards in this small school are contributed to by differences between cohorts and the small numbers of pupils, which makes statistical analysis less reliable. Pupils are making good progress from their starting points in the school.

- The school's self-assessment is based on thorough analysis of performance data. The senior leadership team can describe and account for the changes in performance.
- The self-evaluation carried out by the school has led to a review to identify possible areas for improvement, such as checking that the challenge of lessons is appropriate to the pupils. This has also resulted in the move to a more integrated and creative curriculum.
- Pupils are encouraged to participate, contribute ideas and take responsibility for the quality of their work. The learning environment, varied activities and working with other pupils is promoting good personal development.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite, and aware of the needs of others. They readily help each other.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. There are high levels of trust and respect in classrooms and around the school. There is a positive environment for learning.
- Planning is detailed and of good quality, ensuring that pupils have good opportunities to engage in interesting activities that stimulate their application to learning.
- Teachers have the freedom to exercise their creativity in their short term planning to meet the needs of pupils. Long and medium term planning is thorough and carried out by the whole staff. This results in high levels of coherence, not just coverage.
- Pupils' contributions are valued and teachers' positive responses and their encouragement to pupils to participate builds their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- The teaching of science is built securely on the belief that science investigation is at the heart of learning in science. This leads to pupils' high levels of engagement but also to developing their ability to work independently and responsibly.
- Assessment strategies are well organised, systematic and effective at monitoring the progress made by pupils. Transition meetings for all staff ensure a continuum of learning between classes.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum provided is good.

- There is a well balanced programme of learning activities for science that is both broad and based on relevant science.
- Much of the work relates to contexts that the pupils encounter and are aware of. The scheme of work ensures that they acquire first-hand experiences of a wide range of activities.
- The school has moved away from following the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) scheme of work and has developed broader themes to allow for greater creativity and improved integration of subjects and skills.

- The curriculum change has been arrived at collaboratively, with individual class teachers being responsible for the short term planning for their class.
- The curriculum is enriched in a range of ways including visitors to the school, visits to a range of locations and activities such as residential experiences and work at field centres.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- You have created a positive climate for curriculum development and subject co-ordination.
- The science co-ordinator works effectively with other staff to develop planning, teaching and learning in science.
- The co-ordinator has a systematic approach to managing the subject and she supports staff effectively, not least through the high quality of her documentation and communication.
- Much work is done collaboratively and National Curriculum requirements are secured. Yet teachers are given the freedom to be creative and devise engaging experiences in science for their classes.
- The good leadership demonstrates how important science investigation is to developing pupils into effective learners in science. Planning ensures repetition is avoided but reinforcement is made possible.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing monitoring and evaluation of science teaching to include systematic classroom observations by the co-ordinator
- further promoting good practice in teaching and learning of science.

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