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Ms R Walden
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Walden

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 January 2009 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 the status and use of scientific enquiry as well as the range of learning experiences.

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 and talking to pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards of science

Standards in science are above average and achievement is good.

- Pupils start school in the foundation stage with attainment that is significantly below average. They make good progress and reach good standards by the end of Year 6, although more could reach the higher Level 5.
- The many different groups of pupils in the school are seen to be achieving well and none are disadvantaged.

- As a result of a strong emphasis on investigative science pupils develop good experimental skills and are keen participants in lessons, approaching their work with obvious enthusiasm.
- Pupils behave very well in science. A good emphasis on team work encourages them to take responsibility for managing their own work.
- Pupils produce good standard of written work that shows a range of different activities and covers all aspects of the science curriculum.
- Science is valued for the important contribution it makes to pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. This is enhanced by the very good extension of science outside of the classroom.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The overall quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Teachers' relationships with pupils are good and high levels of trust and mutual respect produces a very positive learning environment.
- Planning ensures there is a good variety of learning experiences that encourage pupils to be actively involved in their learning. They are developing their own ideas and investigating them to determine validity. Information and communication technology (ICT) is thoroughly embedded in everyday classroom practice.
- Teachers are careful to make sure that factual science content is taught with a significant emphasis on developing practical skills.
- There is a very successful emphasis on developing thinking skills through science that enhances learning.
- Teachers are skilled in using questioning in lessons to explore and develop pupils understanding of scientific ideas.
- There are clear efforts by staff to teach literacy through science, such as using different team work roles to promote speaking and listening skills.
- Imaginative and relevant activities in lessons capture pupils' interest and stimulate their curiosity. For example, a creative use of puppets in some science lessons encourages pupils to think through and discuss their science understanding and ideas.
- Pupils' science books are well marked and corrected, although not enough helpful advice is given on how to improve the level of work.
- The school works hard to ensure teaching meets the needs of all pupils in the mixed age classes. They recognise the need to take extra care that work is appropriate to the different ages and levels of development of pupils in the same class.
- Learning is well supported by skilled and experienced teaching assistants who are valued members of the teaching teams.

Quality of the curriculum of science

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work form the basis of the science curriculum although the teachers are careful to

adapt these to pupils' needs and plan carefully to deliver science in contexts that are relevant and interesting to the pupils.

- This is very well supported by comprehensive planning for investigative science that ensures good development of skills.
- The foundation stage curriculum is developed around focused teaching and independent activities that allow pupils to explore, make predictions, investigate and report back.
- The school places considerable value on the role of science outside of the classroom. The nearby school allotment and playground 'micro-farm' are well used and make an important contribution to improving environmental awareness in an inner-city location.
- The school also makes good use of the 'SEEDS' project where older Key Stage 2 pupils work with and tutor younger ones in science.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The new science coordinator has made a good start in both carrying on and developing the good work of the previous coordinator. There is a clear vision for the development of science within a whole school context.
- Science is thoroughly planned and resourced with well organised and managed equipment. Teachers have been supported through good quality in-house training in science delivered by the previous coordinator.
- The school's effective monitoring systems give a clear view of the strengths and areas for development in science.
- Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and collated centrally to give a good overview of individual achievement and progress that can be tracked from one year to the next as pupils move through the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring marking is informative and gives pupils more guidance on the level of their work and what they need to do to improve
- making sure that the work pupils are given is appropriate to their age and current stage of development.

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

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector