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Ms B Soneye-Thomas  
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Dear Ms Soneye-Thomas

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 March 2009 to look at work in science.

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 analysis of data, interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average.

- Data which take account of pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 and contextual factors show that pupils who reached the end of Key Stage 2 in 2005, 2006 and 2007 made good progress in science.
- Unvalidated data show that at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2008 an average proportion of pupils achieved the expected Level 4 in science in national tests. The proportion achieving the higher Level 5 was lower than average and lower than the previous year. Given pupils' prior attainment these results indicate that these pupils made satisfactory progress in science.
- Standards in the lessons observed were satisfactory and most pupils' made satisfactory progress.
- Behaviour observed in lessons was good for most pupils.

## Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- The lessons observed were all satisfactory and included some good features.
- Teachers' classroom management is good and this fosters the good attitudes to learning shown by most pupils most of the time.
- Lessons include a range of activities to engage interest, including experimental work.
- Pupils were positive about science lessons which they enjoy, especially the practical activities.
- Pupils have some good opportunities to discuss ideas about science in groups or with talk partners.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support in lessons for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Some good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly electronic whiteboards.
- Teachers make some effective use of question and answer sessions.
- In the lessons observed the pace of learning was generally set by a teacher led, whole class approach. Some pupils, especially the more able, could achieve more.
- In some lessons there is insufficient attention to the use of scientific terminology.
- In the lessons observed activities were generally not planned to meet the needs of all pupils and they were often insufficiently challenging for more able pupils.
- Older pupils know the target levels they are aiming for.
- Lesson plans vary in format and detail and are not always sufficiently focused on what pupils are to learn and how they are to learn.
- Assessment in science is underdeveloped which means that teachers do not have a sufficiently clear idea of the levels their pupils are working at, or the progress they are making.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- Planning now ensures that the requirements of the national curriculum are met.
- There are some appropriate enrichment activities in science. These include visits to local museums and relevant theatre workshops.
- Some appropriate cross-curricular links are made between subjects. For example, pupils make use of their mathematical skills and ICT skills in producing charts to display scientific data.
- Teachers are beginning to develop a more skills-based curriculum and are increasingly using practical hands-on activities.
- Although improving, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independent investigative skills.

## Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- Senior leaders are aware of many of the strengths and weaknesses in science and a number of actions have been introduced to address areas for development.
- A new scheme of work has been purchased and this is beginning to be used to develop the teaching of scientific enquiry skills.
- Performance management targets have been set to help establish a renewed focus on science.
- Thorough analyses of Key Stage 2 results are carried out, including comparisons of the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- Senior leaders recognise that achievement declined in 2008. Many factors contributed to this including high mobility in Years 5 and 6 and a legacy of underachievement resulting partly from inadequate teaching in previous years. The quality of learning and teaching is now at the forefront of the school's current plans.
- Day-to-day operational management is effective.
- The science coordinator has been in post since September 2008 and has undertaken a scrutiny of planning and pupils' work. He is beginning to use the findings to consider improvements.
- There has been little science specific professional development in science for teachers in recent years. Senior leaders are aware of the need to address this and have arranged an in service training event with an advanced skills teacher in the summer term 2009.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing strategies to ensure that activities and tasks are appropriately challenging to meet the needs of the full range of pupils
- developing better assessment in science to improve the tracking of pupils' progress, and to help teachers to plan work in lessons that meets the needs of all pupils
- offering more opportunities for independent investigative work.

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

Ruth James  
Her Majesty's Inspector