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Mrs J Gott
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gott

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 March 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 SC1 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 in line with the expected levels for their age. Knowledge and Understanding of the world is one of the stronger areas of learning. Pupils make good progress and reach good standards by the end of Year 6. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.
- Different groups of pupils in the school are seen to be achieving well and none are disadvantaged.
- Pupils make good progress in scientific enquiry due to a strong emphasis on practical work that gives good opportunities for investigative activities.

- Science makes an important contribution to younger pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Pupils enjoy their science. They are enthusiastic participants in all the activities and are keen to learn. Pupils work particularly well in groups and with their 'science partners'. As a result behaviour is very good in science sessions.
- Pupils produce a good standard of written work that shows a range of different activities and covers all aspects of the science curriculum. There are some good examples of creative writing in some older pupils' books, for example, Jenner's diary.
- A strong emphasis on correct use of scientific language is improving pupils' vocabulary.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

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

- Teachers are skilled in using questioning to encourage pupils to explore their own ideas and develop their understanding of scientific concepts.
- Lesson planning is good overall but is better where there is a close focus on outcomes for the pupils that allows scope for them to develop and test their own ideas.
- There is a clear focus on developing literacy through science, particularly speaking and listening skills. Pupils are encouraged to present their work and speak confidently in front of their peers.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed for turning ordinary practical activities into really exciting and engaging investigative work through a creative approach to developing pupils' analytical skills.
- There are some good examples of teachers' interventions helping to improve pupils' understanding of scientific concepts in their written work but this is not consistent.
- Tracking of pupils' progress is at an early stage of development in all subjects. Good strategies have been introduced but have not been in place for long enough to demonstrate significant impact.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) very well in their lessons and pupils make good use of computers to support their learning.

Quality of the curriculum of science

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The science curriculum has a suitable emphasis developing pupils' skills and enthusiasm for science. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work form the basis of the science curriculum and are most successful where individual 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 approach is being supported by current work in the school to develop creativity in all aspects of the curriculum.

- Sensing devices, such as light and sound meters, are not used in any science activities even though they have been an integral part of the National Curriculum for science for some time.
- The Foundation Stage curriculum allows a good balance of focused teaching and independent activities that promotes pupils' scientific skills. However this is hampered by the lack of a suitable protected outdoor area that allows for pupils independent movement between indoor and outdoor activities.
- An exciting science club is available to all pupils and is well supported. Some year groups take part in off-site science related visits but there are no arrangements for activities such as science week that involve the whole school.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are satisfactory.

- The middle management structure in the school is currently undergoing significant review by the senior leadership team. This is intended to enhance the subject leader role with a significant emphasis on responsibilities for the quality of education in their areas.
- Recent improvements in the systems used for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and standards are now giving a clearer picture of the strengths and areas for development in all subject areas including science.
- Resources are generally adequate in science although there is an urgent need to develop subject specific ICT resources.
- Training for science coordinators has been limited, although there has been some successful input in experimental and investigative science.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the use of ICT, particularly sensing devices, to support learning in science
- planning for a consistent use of investigative science in all classes in line with the best practice in the school.

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