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Mrs G Rabey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rabey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 27 January 2009 to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on tracking the impact of recent initiatives and investigating the need for future developments.

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

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievements are good and standards in science are above recent national averages.

- Overall attainment at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. However, in 2008, the proportion of pupils attaining at least Level 3 in science was above national average. Boys and girls make similar progress and analyses by ethnicity and ability show no significant differences.
- Attainment at Key Stage 2 is good. In 2008 the proportions of pupils attaining at least Level 4 or Level 5 in science were above national averages.

- Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in science is good.
- Pupils produce work of a good standard in science lessons, especially when they work together in small groups during investigations. They really enjoy practical work and respond well to the challenge of investigating.
- Behaviour is good and the pupils cooperate well with each other. They listen attentively to each other and often show appropriate sensitivity to other points of view.
- Pupils' written work is of a satisfactory standard.
- Over the past two years, the pupils have won several Bexley borough awards for their engagement with recycling and environmental conservation.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

Teaching and learning are good.

- Four lessons were observed and all were judged to be good. All four lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Science lessons are well prepared and resourced. Teachers are confident and the variety of short activities they use help the pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers are skilled at using directed questions and leave space for pupils to develop their thinking and clarify their explanations.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well both to introduce lessons and to help pupils stay focused.
- The pupils have access to a good range of scientific equipment and a well resourced ICT suite. However, data logging is under-developed.
- In the best activities the pupils are fully engaged and clearly understand what they are to find out. Occasionally some planning is over-ambitious, there are too many activities and some activities are less interesting than others.
- In the main, teaching assistants bring effective support to science lessons.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers show increased confidence in cross-moderation and levelling pupils' work and there has been an emphasis on assessment in professional development training.
- There is good evidence that pupils, especially at Key Stage 2, are engaged with their progress and assessments. They spoke at length and with confidence about success criteria, self-evaluation sheets and test scores.
- Marking is frequent and tracking progress is good. Data are centrally held and kept up to date. However, some marking is inconsistent and there is little evidence of follow up.

Quality of the science curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum at both key stages meets the needs of the pupils effectively. Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

schemes have been substantially adapted to meet specific needs. Topics, such as forces and data handling, have been changed and re-timetabled to align with other subjects such as mathematics.

- Differentiated topics are well planned for and meet the needs of the less able pupils.
- Environmental aspects of science are well developed.
- Enrichment is good. Year 6 pupils visit Halls Green for three days each year and the wildlife and gardening clubs are thriving.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- Senior leaders in the school give strong support to science.
- Specialist resources for science teaching and learning are good and are well-managed.
- Teachers are well qualified. Two members of staff have science as part of their degrees and act as advisers for non-specialists.
- The science coordinator is a senior member of staff with additional responsibilities for Early Years Foundation Stage. She benefited from a well organised period of transition when she took on the role of science coordinator.
- Recent continuing professional development (CPD) for staff has focussed on literacy, numeracy and planning for active learning. School-developed INSET for environmental education has been successfully carried out.
- The science self-evaluation and action plans have both recently been thoroughly reviewed and developed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to improve attainment at Key Stage 1
- developing more consistency and follow up to marked work
- further refining the science development plan and action plans, simplifying the formats and ensuring that are actions firmly matched to priorities.

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

Alex Falconer
Her Majesty's Inspector