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Mr S Peacock
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Peacock

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 March 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 to investigate 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 at recent national averages.

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 has improved but is below national average. Pupils come to Key Stage 1 with modest achievements in the Foundation Stage and take time to catch up. This is to be expected in view of the low levels of literacy in the community the school serves.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in science is higher than in English and mathematics. Science Key Stage 2 test results are broadly satisfactory and have been around the national average for some years.

- Progress made by pupils is good. No group by ability or ethnicity makes better progress than any other. However, at Key Stage 1, girls achieve higher scores than boys.
- Standards of work in class are good and written work shows a good variety of recording styles and a variety of relevant tasks at appropriate levels.
- Behaviour is good, pupils cooperate well with one another and show respect for each other's opinions.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

Teaching and learning are good.

- Science lessons are well planned and generally contain interesting activities and investigations.
- In the best lessons teachers are confident and show good humour which relaxes the pupils but does not detract from the depth or pace of learning.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well and make good use of overhead projection with "visualisers" which aptly illustrate circuits, condensation and other phenomena. However, there are few activities in science where pupils use ICT.
- Sometimes, however, the lessons are too teacher led and the pupils are passive for extended periods.
- Question and answer is well used in science lessons and space is left for pupils to respond and to think through their responses.
- Assessment is well developed. The pupils speak confidently about their targets and the results of end of topic tests. Tracking and monitoring of progress are well carried out and centrally held data used well to set targets.
- Marking is regular and, in the main, includes helpful comments on how pupils can improve. However, not enough emphasis is given in written work to recording predictions prior to investigations.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum meets the needs of pupils. Schemes of work are very detailed and the curriculum has recently been successfully reviewed and reorganised.
- Some cross-curricular links are made between science and mathematics and design and technology.
- Enrichment is satisfactory. A variety of trips and visits to local environmental sites and the Science Museum take place to enthuse and interest the pupils.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are satisfactory.

- Science is currently led by the senior leadership team while the focus of the school has been on developing literacy and numeracy.
- Attainment in science, although better than in English and mathematics, has not improved at Key Stage 2 for some years.
- Tracking and monitoring of pupils progress is good as is the evaluation of teaching and learning in science.
- Continuing professional development for science has not been high on the agenda recently, in view of the focus on literacy and numeracy.
- Resources for science are, in the main, good. Day to day science equipment for investigations is good and topic boxes are well organised.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising attainment in science
- appointing a science coordinator
- developing more ICT and for pupils to use in science
- continuing to develop investigations in science including pupils' recording of their predictions.

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