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Mr K Briffett
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Dear Mr Briffett

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 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 satisfactory and standards in science are around the national average.

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 has improved over four years and was around the national average in 2008.
- Boys do not perform quite as well as girls. Progress is satisfactory and no group by ability or ethnicity makes less progress than any other.
- At Key Stage 2 the attainment of pupils in science has been around national averages for the past three years but declined slightly in 2008.

- Overall, the progress pupils make in science through the school is good. Pupils come to the school with literacy and numeracy levels below average and leave at around the national average.
- Current standards of work and behaviour in class are good. The pupils enjoy science and their enthusiasm is obvious. They cooperate well with each other in a variety of tasks and use a good range of ways of recording their findings. However, they do not always use a range of reference sources to deepen and strengthen their knowledge.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers are confident in science lessons and are well prepared. They successfully pose questions to the pupils that test their understanding and they allow sufficient space for the pupils to think and respond fully.
- Relationships in class are good and a comfortable learning atmosphere is fostered by teachers. In addition, teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with a variety of additional learning needs.
- Investigations are well planned and capture the pupils' interest. Well produced investigation prompts help them make predictions, carry out fair tests and structure their written records.
- Sometimes lessons take too long on the planning of investigations, leaving not enough time to investigate and record findings.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to illustrate lessons and to engage the pupils. However, the school recognises that the use of ICT by the pupils in science is still developing.
- Assessment is good and the centrally held data are well used to track pupils' progress. Pupils in Key Stage 2 spoke with confidence about the targets that they are set.
- Marking is good and contains appropriate praise. However, there are inconsistencies in following up comments on improvements needed.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum is well thought through and successfully meets the needs of the pupils of all ability.
- Schemes of work are based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidelines modified to meet the specific needs of each year group. Some topics have been reviewed recently and amalgamated and re-timetabled to fit with major curriculum themes.
- Major topic themes are planned for each half term and subjects like science, design and technology and geography then chose topics that are relevant. For example during a theme on water for years 3 and 4, literacy and numeracy was developed and the science work focused on plants and their development. When Year 6 was focusing on moving toys in design and technology the science work dealt with forces.
- Enrichment in science is good. There is a strong ecological and conservation focus which the pupils enjoy.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- Science has the full support of the senior leadership and the recently appointed science coordinator is an enthusiast who is having a positive impact.
- No member of the teaching staff is a science specialist but this is not a barrier to the development of science in the school.
- Professional development for teachers, organised by the science coordinator, has centred on planning and carrying out investigations and action planning for the science improvement plan. However, there has been little updating of science knowledge for teachers over the past few years.
- Resources for science are good and there is no shortage of equipment for investigations.
- Tracking and monitoring of pupils progress is good as are teaching and learning in science. Some interesting analyses of attainment across the school and pupils' responses to national test questions have been completed and are being used to develop appropriate interventions.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to raise standards in science
- making sure that there is consistent follow up of marked work
- continuing to develop ICT for pupils in science

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