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Mrs J Hirst
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hirst

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 May 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.

- Unvalidated data for 2008 show that the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 by the end of Key Stage 2 was just above the national average, but the proportion reaching the expected level was below average. Validated data for the results of national tests in 2007 show that results were similar.
- Data which take into account pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 1 and contextual factors show that for the cohort of pupils who left the school in 2007 progress in science was well above average. Data for other years show that during Key Stage 2 pupils typically make average progress in science.
- Pupils' written work is of broadly average standard. It covers a range of different activities and includes examples of investigative work.
- In the lessons observed pupils' progress was satisfactory overall

- In the Foundation Stage children are encouraged to make observations, express their own ideas and to try out things for themselves. This provides pupils with a very sound basis for further learning higher up the school.
- Behaviour observed in lessons was very good. The ethos in the school is warm and positive and the children treat each other with respect.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationships with their pupils. They are encouraging and patient. This contributes to the good attitudes to learning shown by pupils.
- In lessons teachers take care to explain scientific ideas clearly and to use appropriate scientific vocabulary. For example in a Year 5 lesson the teacher took care to explain the difference between the dependent and independent variables, reinforcing pupils' prior knowledge.
- Investigations are put into context which helps to make them meaningful for pupils. For example in a Year 2 class the investigation focused on keeping a mouse warm, and in a Year 4/5 class materials suitable for making a Tudor style ship were considered.
- There are some good opportunities for collaborative group work in lessons. Pupils were positive about their involvement in practical work, recognising that it helps them to learn and remember.
- In some lessons the teacher led introductory sessions are too long. This leads to a slow pace at times, especially for more able pupils who could achieve more in the time available.
- Teachers give pupils opportunities to plan their own investigations but do not always recognise when intervention is needed to enable the pupils to move on. In the lessons observed pupils often found planning difficult and too much time was lost as they struggled to translate their ideas into an experiment they could do.
- Teaching assistants contribute well, supporting individuals and groups.
- There are regular assessments in science and progress against individual targets is monitored effectively twice a year.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- The move to a themed curriculum has been carefully planned to ensure that science is integrated where possible, but delivered as separate units of work where necessary.
- Pupils are provided with a good range of learning experiences, including investigative and experimental work.
- The school offers very good science enrichment activities. These are particularly valuable for those children who have limited experiences outside their own locality. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about visits to a farm, museums, and visitors to the school, and these clearly make an impact.
- Some effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote learning. For example, videos of pupils undertaking

different physical activities were shown in a lesson about the effect of exercise on pulse rate. In another lesson concept cartoons helped stimulate discussion about filtering a mixture of soil and water.

- In the Foundation Stage there is a good range of opportunities for children to develop knowledge and understanding of the world.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- Clear direction is provided by the senior leadership team, and there is a strong focus on raising standards.
- There is some monitoring of science provision, for example through monitoring of planning. However there are no systematic observations of science lessons.
- There are some very good science displays in classrooms.
- Day to day operational management is effective.
- Science is thoroughly resourced with well organised and managed materials and equipment.
- There is no development plan for science, and few references to science in the school development plan.
- Pupils' progress is tracked carefully to give a good overview of individual achievement and progress that can be tracked from one year to the next as pupils move through the school.
- There has been limited recent professional development in science for teachers. The school reports that the local authority offers few opportunities for such courses. The science coordinator attends local coordinator meetings.

Areas for improvement, which we considered, included:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning in science so that more of the lessons are good by increasing the pace, especially for more able pupils
- further developing monitoring of curriculum provision in science.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As explained in the 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