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Mrs C McKeown
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McKeown

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 June 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are above average.

- Data from national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show that standards in science are above average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 has been well above average for the last two years.
- Data which take into account pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 1 and contextual factors show that pupils consistently make good progress during Key Stage 2.
- In the lessons observed pupils made good progress, developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in science.
- Pupils' personal development is very good. Behaviour observed in lessons was excellent.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They collaborate well with each other in group activities and many are articulate and confident, using their good vocabularies effectively.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. They are encouraging and supportive, and this contributes to pupils' enthusiasm for science.
- Lessons are well planned and include a variety of different activities that pupils enjoy.
- Teachers take care to explain scientific ideas clearly and to reinforce the use of appropriate scientific vocabulary.
- There are some good opportunities for collaborative group work in lessons.
- Learning resources are good and teachers make effective use of them.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to learning, supporting individuals and groups.
- Teachers make some effective use of pupil self-assessment in lessons.
- Some effective questioning was seen, especially where a teacher's initial question was followed up with supplementary questions to encourage deeper thinking.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology to support learning.
- Some effective differentiation of work was seen. For example, in one lesson about adaptation the teacher gave a more demanding activity to the more able pupils. However in some other cases the work given to more able pupils was different rather than more challenging.
- Marking of pupils books is helpful in identifying strengths and giving pupils pointers to improving their work.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- Pupils are provided with a good range of learning experiences, including some investigative and experimental work.
- The move to a more integrated curriculum is being carefully planned to ensure that science is integrated where possible.
- Good use is made of the local outdoor environment including the school grounds and garden area and the 'Forest School'. The school has the Eco-Schools Green Flag award.
- The curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides good opportunities for pupils to explore the world around where they learn respect for living things. In the observed lesson pupils were fascinated as they watched snails crawling and they took great care when handling them.
- Imaginative use has been made of 'Brain Building' homework books to encourage pupils to explore and research different topics in an open-ended way. Their books showed that they take pride in their work.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- Science is effectively led by you at present.
- Pupils' progress in science is tracked effectively as they move through the school. The data is analysed effectively to show rates of progress and to identify and follow up underachievement.
- The science development plan is a useful document that identifies a range of appropriate actions including cross-curricular planning, and improving the use of peer- and self-assessment. It also clearly identifies the need for more staff development in science, particularly in terms of teaching the skills of scientific enquiry.
- There is some monitoring of science provision, for example through observations, scrutiny of work, and pupil feedback.
- The school's self evaluation of science is largely accurate.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing more opportunities for independent investigative work
- continuing to develop teaching and learning strategies to challenge the most able pupils
- further developing the curriculum to improve the links between science and other subject areas.

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