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Mr D Wilmot
Headteacher
Cams Hill School
Shearwater Avenue
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PO16 8AH

Dear Mr Wilmot

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with you, discussions with senior staff, observation of lessons, scrutiny of documents and scrutiny of pupils' work.

Features of good practice observed

- Students make very good progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards in science are well above average at both key stages. The number of students achieving the highest grades is significantly higher than both local and national averages.
- In spite of recruitment issues the department is staffed with a good range of teachers who are specialists in their subjects. The school makes good use of their expertise by ensuring that, as far as possible, they teach within their specialist areas.
- In lessons there is a careful focus on ensuring the level of the work is appropriate to the abilities of the students. This is shared with students during the lessons giving greater clarity and understanding of the demand of the work.
- Teachers are skilled in developing thinking skills through science, especially through the use of thinking frame techniques developed as part of the work of the Cams Hill Science Consortium.

- The use of targets is thoroughly embedded in the work of the department. They are used regularly both to evaluate the level of students' work and to give them feedback on standards.
- Planning for the science curriculum is focused on building key science concepts from Key Stage 1 through to Key Stage 4. This results in clear continuity and progression in the development of scientific concepts, understanding and skills.
- Students are keen and enthusiastic scientists who see science as a subject that extends beyond the classroom. They are ready participants in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities such as science clubs, acting as science ambassadors, and external inputs from visitors and competitions.
- Excellent leadership and management of the science department are focused on ensuring the best possible science education. Every lesson is seen as of vital importance and expected to be of the highest quality.
- The department is well supported by the senior management team. They contribute to developing high status innovative work through the school's science specialist status and the work of the Cams Hill Science Consortium coordinated by the Director of Specialism.

Areas for development, which we discussed, included:

- bringing consistency to marking pupils' work so that pupils receive feedback of the same quality on their day-to-day work.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector