

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



08 July 2009

Mr R Buckley
Headteacher
St Paul's Primary School
The Oaks
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN15 1DU

Dear Mr Buckley

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.

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 investigating 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' progress is good and standards in science are broadly at national averages.

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 is slightly below national averages.
- Attainment in science at Key Stage 2 in 2008 was at national average. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 3 and Level 4 in science was broadly at national averages but the proportion attaining Level 5 or above was below national averages. There is no difference in performance between boys and girls in science at the end of Key Stage 2.

- Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is good and overall the school was in the top third of schools in 2008 for progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.
- Pupils produce work of a good standard in science lessons and successfully record and analyse the results of investigations. Many pupils are confidently developing predicting and planning skills in their science lessons. In addition pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, use scientific terms with confidence.
- Behaviour is very good and the pupils cooperate well with each other.
- Pupils' attitudes to science are good and they speak positively of their enthusiasm for investigations and the new knowledge that science gives them.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

Teaching and learning are good.

- All lessons observed were good.
- Science lessons are well planned and are a good mixture of investigative work, discussion and theory. Pupils enjoy planning and carrying out investigations which form an appropriate proportion of the science curriculum.
- Teachers are confident when teaching science and are well prepared. They, and the teaching assistants, manage pupils' behaviour well to ensure that classes are calm and good environments in which to learn.
- Small group work, paired discussion and teacher directed mixed group work are all effective in keeping the pace of learning brisk.
- The pupils have access to a good range of scientific equipment and a well resourced information and communication technology (ICT) suite. Teachers use ICT well to introduce lessons and to present interesting images and information. However, pupils' use of ICT in science, such as data logging, is still developing.
- Assessment is good. Marking and assessment have been the focus of recent staff development. The range of tracking and monitoring software used by teachers has improved and managers are now able to confidently predict pupils' progress across the school.
- Pupils are set appropriate targets and they speak confidently about their progress in science.
- The standard of marked work in science has improved and is now good. Pupils' work is regularly marked and contains helpful comments on how to improve. Progress is well tracked and centrally held data are kept up to date.

Quality of the science curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum has recently been reviewed and changed. The new programmes are based on the qualifications and curriculum authority (QCA) guidelines that have been modified to suit the school and to reduce repetition.

- The new programmes are popular with teachers and pupils and effectively meet the needs of the range of ability and interests across the school. Both gifted and talented and the less able are well integrated into science activities. Science is a means of success for all abilities in the school.
- Investigations are well integrated into teaching schemes and National Curriculum topics are fully covered.
- Enrichment is good. A wide range of activities including a young engineers club, visits and trips are in place to enthuse and encourage pupils.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- Science is well led by the coordinator, who, although not a science graduate, is an enthusiast. The day-to-day running of science activities is well organised. One member of the teaching staff has a science degree but all are confident to teach the full range of topics.
- Senior leaders in the school give strong support to science and staff morale is high.
- Training and staff development in science are also well organised. The current coordinator has completed both specialist science training and middle management training. Other teachers have appropriate access to in-service training both in school and through Bath Spa University.
- Resources for science are good and well-managed. There is no shortage of specialist equipment for investigations. Teaching and learning have improved and recent curriculum developments have made science both more relevant and accessible.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to improve attainment especially at Key Stage 1
- increasing the range of ICT available to pupils in science lessons.

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