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Mr Pearson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pearson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 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' achievements are good and standards in science are at national averages.

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 has improved over the past three years. In 2007/08 attainment improved to the national average and the latest figures for 2008/09 show a similar increase, especially for pupils attaining Level 3 and above.
- Attainment at Key Stage 2 has also improved. In 2007/08 science attainments were broadly at national averages. However, assessment and tracking data for the current year give good evidence for continued improvement.

- Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in science is good.
- Pupils, especially at Key Stage 2, are aware of the standard of their work and the targets they are aiming for. In addition they show facility with, and confidence in, using a good variety of technical and scientific terms.
- Pupils produce work of a good standard in science lessons and make good use of a wide variety of modes of writing to record and analyse their investigations. Many pupils are confidently developing predicting and planning skills in their science lessons.
- Behaviour is very good and the pupils cooperate well with each other.

Quality of teaching and learning in science

Teaching and learning are good.

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Science lessons are well planned and make good use of investigative work and practical activities to encourage and enthuse the pupils.
- Teachers are confident in their science knowledge and use information and communication technology (ICT) well. In one outstanding lesson an exciting combination of video clips and practical work allowed a Year 6 class to make very good progress in understanding adaptation and evolution.
- The pupils have access to a good range of scientific equipment and a well resourced ICT suite. However, data logging is under-developed.
- In the best lessons differentiated activities allow pupils of different ability to make appropriate progress. However, in others, whole class activities do not always take into account the full range of ability.
- Assessment is good. Teachers use directed questions well and often leave time for pupils to think and to explain their ideas. Recent emphasis on scientific enquiry in professional development activities has brought new confidence to teaching and emphasis on pupils' learning in science.
- Marking is regular and tracking progress is well done. Data are centrally held and kept up to date. However, some marking is inconsistent and occasionally comments are not always followed up.

Quality of the science curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The whole school curriculum at both key stages has recently been completely reviewed and rewritten. The science components have been integrated successfully into termly and half-termly topics. This has led to renewed emphasis on investigative work and to less repetition of specific topics.
- Investigations are well integrated into teaching schemes and National Curriculum topics are fully covered.
- More cross-curricular links are now made between science and other subject areas.

- Enrichment is satisfactory. A number of interesting trips and visits take place each year and environmental aspects of science are well dealt with. However, the science club has not functioned this year.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- Senior leaders in the school give strong support to science and staff morale is high.
- The science co-ordinators are well qualified scientists and give a good lead and direction to the development of science in the school.
- The newly developed curriculum effectively integrates science into broad topics that allow more relevant contexts for the science activities and more creativity from teachers.
- Recent continuing professional development (CPD) for staff has successfully focussed on scientific enquiry. The science co-ordinators have also taken advantage of recent relevant training and development.
- Resources for science are good overall. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. The classrooms provide good learning environments.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to improve attainment at both key stages
- developing more consistency and follow up to marked work
- further development of differentiated activities to meet the full range of ability
- 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