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Mrs D Sulley
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Dear Mrs Sulley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average.

- Unvalidated data for 2008 show that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2 was a little below the national average. This represents an improvement on the 2007 results, but a smaller proportion reached the higher Level 5 in 2008 than in 2007. These fluctuations in standards are partly associated with the small numbers of pupils in different cohorts, and the differing ranges of ability.
- 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 2008 progress in science was satisfactory. This represents an improvement when compared with 2007. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' progress in science is now satisfactory.
- Pupils' written work is of broadly average standard. It covers a range of different activities and includes examples of investigative work.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationships with their pupils. They are encouraging and supportive.
- Lessons are planned to include a variety of activities which children enjoy.
- Teachers take care to explain scientific ideas clearly and to use appropriate scientific vocabulary.
- Good use is made of a range of practical resources. For example in a lesson about plant life cycles, as well as visiting the school garden, children looked at cress and bean plants they had grown from seed, and a wide range of different fruits.
- In some lessons there is too much teacher talk with too little active involvement of pupils. This leads to a slow pace at times. On occasion it also leads to minor inattention or misbehaviour and this was not always challenged quickly enough.
- Teachers do not always plan work to meet the full range of abilities in lessons, so that the work is very difficult for the less able, or not sufficiently challenging for the more able. There were examples in pupils' books of pupils of widely differing abilities having been given the same task.
- There are some good opportunities for collaborative work in science lessons and pupils usually work well together.
- Teachers give pupils opportunities to plan their own investigations but do not always intervene quickly enough when pupils find it difficult to translate their ideas into an experiment that can be carried out in the classroom.
- Teaching assistants make useful contributions in lessons, supporting individuals and groups.
- Marking often includes helpful comments about the next steps pupils need to take to move on in their learning.

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 practical activities.
- Good use is made of the school's garden in teaching science. For example, in a lesson about plant life cycles pupils observed the activity of bees visiting strawberry flowers and looked at developing strawberry fruits.
- The school offers good science enrichment activities, including visits and a science club. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the various investigations they had undertaken in the science club. Other clubs, such as cookery and gardening, are also used to develop understanding of science.
- Some effective use is made of ICT to promote learning. For example, a time lapse photography clip was used effectively in a lesson about plant

life cycles. In another lesson investigating woodlouse habitats, good use was made of video clips made by pupils.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- The school's own evaluation of science is broadly accurate.
- Your specialist expertise in science is being put to good use, particularly in terms of improving the science curriculum with a stronger focus on investigative work.
- The school development plan recognises the need to expand the range of 'hands on' experimental and investigative activities.
- Strategies to raise achievement in science are beginning to have an impact, as is demonstrated in the improvement in results between 2007 and 2008.
- There has been some recent professional development in science for teachers, particularly in relation to teaching science investigative skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing teaching and learning strategies to ensure that the needs of pupils across the full range of ages and abilities in classes are met
- improving the level of challenge in the work for more able pupils
- further increasing opportunities for pupils to plan and carry out independent investigations.

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