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Ms L Perrier  
Headteacher  
Harlesden Primary School  
Acton Lane  
London  
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Dear Ms Perrier

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 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: interviews with yourself and the subject leader for science, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of children's work and observation of four part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Although pupils' standards are below the average, their achievement in science is good.

- Standards in science vary with each cohort. Generally, standards in the national tests are below the average by the end of Key Stage 2. This represents good achievement as most pupils' starting points are well below the average and a majority of pupils learn to speak English whilst at school.
- Occasionally, standards in science reach the national average, as in 2008 when seven out of eight pupils achieved the national expectation in science and when one in three achieved the highest level, Level 5. This represented outstanding progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start in acquiring the skills of science. They show great curiosity and interest in activities that promote their exploration and observation, particularly of the natural world. This is true both for children who have good English and for those who are at the early stages of learning the language.

- Pupils enjoy science. The school canvasses pupils' opinions about science and they say they particularly enjoy doing experiments.
- Science makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. They collaborate well when working together to conduct investigations. However, there is scope for pupils' personal development to improve further through science, as pupils could play an even larger part in planning investigations, collecting the resources they need for themselves, and in choosing how they record their outcomes.

### Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good, overall.

- Teachers' subject knowledge of science is generally good. The teaching of science is underpinned by good generic teaching skills. For example, teachers prepare and mark work in science well and each lesson observed made clear to pupils what they were to learn. The relationships between teachers and pupils are good and teachers manage pupils' behaviour and excitement effectively.
- The school ensures that teachers and pupils have good levels of support in science lessons for children who have learning difficulties and for those learning English as a new language.
- All teachers emphasise the language of science rigorously, as the acquisition of relevant subject language is a major priority for the school.
- In general, there is scope for reducing the formality of teaching in science, giving older pupils more opportunities to set up their own investigations and to give younger ones more opportunities to explore and talk about science without recording their findings formally, in writing.

### Quality of the science curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- Science is firmly based on first-hand investigations.
- Opportunities to practice core skills such as writing, data handling and information communications technology are incorporated within science lessons.
- Science is promoted well through a good range of extra-curricular activities, through visits that make good use of the world-class resources for science within London, and by welcoming visitors to the school with a science focus.
- The school, through its Science Weeks, has recognised the value of organising the school day to permit pupils to undertake longer investigations over a day or more. This innovative use of curriculum time is still at an early stage of development.

## Leadership and management of science

The leadership and management of science are outstanding.

- You and the science subject leader promote science exceptionally well. The development of science is a priority for the school and the direction is clearly focused on the pupils' enjoyment of science through investigations.
- Science teaching and learning are rigorously monitored and pupils' progress thoroughly tracked. Governors are well informed about progress in science.
- Parents' involvement in their children's science work is encouraged.
- Science leadership is imaginative and innovative; for example, in using the expertise of a London University for professional development and in promoting the potential of the National Science Museum for family learning about science.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- promoting the investigative skills of science further by providing older pupils with more opportunities to plan, carry out and record investigations for themselves
- providing more opportunities for the younger pupils to investigate and talk about science without the need to record their findings formally.

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

Brian Padgett  
Her Majesty's Inspector