

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



24 June 2009

Mr R Pippen
Headteacher
Old Priory Junior School
The Ridgeway
Plympton
Plymouth
Devon
PL7 1QN

Dear Mr Pippen

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 June 2009 to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of science, the visit had a particular focus on transition within and between phases (Key Stage 1-Key Stage 2-Key Stage 3); the range of learning experiences; the status and use of SC1.

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, pupils and governors, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of three lessons and a tour of the school and grounds.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in science are above average and achievement is good.

- Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. In 2008 all pupils attained at least Level 4 in the science Key Stage 2 national tests.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make slightly better progress than their peers.

- In order to further improve achievement in science the school needs to increase the percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 5.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, behave extremely well and work very hard in lessons. They work well both individually and collaboratively when carrying out scientific investigations.
- The school has recently established, with parental help, a market garden and started to keep chickens and ducks. This initiative is significantly aiding pupils understanding of care for the environment and living things, food production and healthy eating.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the teaching of science.
- Lessons are well planned around clear learning outcomes for pupils and they contain interesting activities that actively engage pupils in learning.
- Lessons are characterised by positive relationships between teachers and pupils. This promotes pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and their enjoyment of science.
- Effective questioning is used to check and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of science.
- Work is differentiated well for most pupils. However, in some lessons there is an insufficient level of challenge for more able pupils.
- Most work is marked well giving pupils helpful advice about how to improve. However, this is not consistently the case.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum has a clear emphasis on developing pupils' sense of enquiry and curiosity in the world around them.
- Imaginative use is made of the school grounds to promote pupils' learning of the natural sciences.
- Schemes of work cover the requirements of the National Curriculum and are adapted well by teachers to ensure that they meet the needs of the pupils in their class.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of scientific enquiry are well integrated into schemes of work.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The recently appointed science co-ordinator has taken effective steps to further raise the profile of science in the school.

- The science co-ordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of science in the school and has good plans in place to improve provision and outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science is regularly assessed. This information is now stored centrally so that pupils' progress over time can be tracked.
- The progress of all pupils is currently judged against national average rates of progress. The science co-ordinator is aware of the need to further develop this system so that the progress of pupils can be tracked and judged against their individual challenging targets.
- The science co-ordinator has recently introduced a scheme to assess the development of pupils' scientific enquiry skills. This is a good initiative but its full impact on improving pupils' progress is yet to be seen.
- Good links exist with a local infant and secondary school to ensure a smooth transition between one key stage and the next.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that more able pupils are suitably challenged in all lessons so that they are able to attain Level 5 in science by the end of Year 6
- ensuring that pupils' progress is tracked over time towards their challenging targets in science.

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

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector