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Mr B Allsopp
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Dear Mr Allsopp

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 8 July 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 the status and use of scientific enquiry as well as the range of learning experiences.

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 talking to pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards of science

Standards in science are below average and overall achievement is satisfactory.

- Information on pupil performance over the past three years shows that Year 6 pupils do not make enough progress in science from Key Stage 1. Preliminary analysis of the test outcomes for 2009 indicates that this situation has continued. The teacher assessments of these pupils accurately reflect the test outcomes.
- However teacher assessments for pupils in Years 3 to 5 indicate progress is improving as the quality of teaching improves.
- Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work also confirm that standards are improving and are currently higher than the test outcomes for present Year 6 pupils would suggest.

- Pupils' written work shows a good variety of activities covering the national curriculum. There is also an appropriate emphasis on the development of investigative skills.
- Pupils behave very well in science. There is a good emphasis on team work that encourages them to take responsibility for organising their own work. They enjoy science and demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- Science makes an important contribution to developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe and live a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

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

- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good with high levels of trust and mutual respect that produce a positive learning environment.
- Lesson planning ensures a suitable range of learning opportunities. There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching through practical activities although this is not always linked clearly to the associated investigative skills.
- Teachers are skilled in using questioning in lessons to explore and develop pupils understanding of scientific ideas. There are some good examples of teachers' interventions helping to improve pupils' understanding of scientific concepts in their written work but this is not consistent.
- Science exercise books are well marked although not enough regular and helpful advice is given to pupils on how to improve the standard of their work. The 'two stars and a wish' approach is used occasionally but not regularly enough to impact on progress.
- Tracking of pupils' progress is at an early stage of development. The use of assessment outcomes to track pupils' progress is developing although not yet used with enough rigour to impact significantly on improving progress and raising standards.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) very well in their lessons and pupils make good use of computers to support their learning.

Quality of the curriculum of science

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum has a suitable emphasis developing pupils' skills and enthusiasm for science. A thematic approach to the curriculum is used well with younger pupils to extend their skill development.
- Science provision is tracked carefully through the planning process to ensure all aspects of the curriculum are covered. Science is taught as a discrete subject with older pupils although this approach is currently under review.
- There is good incorporation of literacy and numeracy into science-based work.
- There is a good emphasis on an investigative approach to science and scientific enquiry is well integrated into curriculum planning.

- The use of sensing devices, such as light and sound meters, is an integral part of science curriculum planning.
- Science is well supported by an exciting range of clubs and other activities. The 'Imagineering' club successfully mixes science and design technology and the family gardening club is well attended. Many school visits have a science theme and the March science week was based on Charles Darwin.
- The weekly 'Granby Academy' sessions cover many subject areas and include practical science sessions for mixed age groups. This allows the science coordinator to work with all pupils in the school and helps to gain an overview of the performance of younger pupils in science.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are satisfactory.

- Science is well planned within a whole school context and the science coordinator has a clear understanding of his role in ensuring good quality science teaching throughout the school.
- The school's monitoring systems are not yet effective enough to give a clear view of the strengths and areas for development in science. These strategies are at an early stage of development and are only just starting to stimulate consistent improvements in practice that will impact on raising standards and achievement.
- Resources are generally adequate, especially for ICT where sensing devices are regularly available.
- There has been some general training for subject leaders but specific training for science coordinators has been generally limited.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards and progress in science through careful and rigorous use of assessment information to track and improve pupils' progress
- a consistent and rigorous approach to marking that informs pupils about the standard of their work and how it can be improved.

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

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector