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Mrs C J Buckley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Buckley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 September 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 evaluating 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good with some outstanding aspects.

Achievement in science

Pupils' achievements are good and standards in science are well above national averages.

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with national averages.
- Pupils' attainment in science at Key Stage 2 is good and has improved over the past four years. In 2009, all the pupils attained Level 4 or better and two thirds attained Level 5 or better.
- Overall, the progress pupils make in their science lessons is at or above that predicted from their Key Stage 1 attainment.

- Achievement in science lessons is good and occasionally outstanding. Pupils' written work is of a good standard. They record the findings from their investigations in a number of ways appropriate to their level of maturity.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good. They work well with each other, and on their own, to research topics using information and communication technology (ICT). They also collaborate to carry out investigations using specialist equipment. The pupils treat each other with respect, creating a warm and positive environment.

Quality of teaching in science

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding characteristics.

- Of the five lessons observed, one was outstanding and four were good.
- Teachers are confident and use ICT well to illustrate ideas and to engage the pupils.
- Lessons are planned well with a good balance of practical investigations and theory work. Science investigations are interesting. They challenge pupils to make predictions and to develop scientific explanations.
- The teachers' good use of questioning and encouragement has contributed to pupils' growing confidence in talking about their understanding of scientific concepts.
- Occasionally, the initial activity lasted too long. As a result, not enough time was allocated to the main activity.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and use a range of activities to engage them and increase achievement.
- Good use of teaching assistants helps pupils to progress in science.
- Assessment is good and organised very well. Up-to-date monitoring of pupils' progress informs managers and teachers alike. Support for teachers on levelling work is planned particularly well. Assessing pupils' progress (APP) is being developed in line with national guidelines.
- Assessment tests are well developed, using carefully levelled materials.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and usually contains helpful comments and confirmation of levels attained.
- Pupils enjoy their science studies and demonstrate a growing confidence in using scientific terminology.

Quality of the science curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum is very well constructed to meet the pupils' needs. It covers the National Curriculum programme of study and a good proportion of investigative work.

- The materials produced by the QCDA have been successfully developed into an effective topic-based programme for each year group.
- Appropriate cross-curricular links are made with other National Curriculum subjects.
- Enrichment in science is good. A well-developed schedule of visits, trips, fieldwork and contributions by guest speakers enthuses the pupils.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management in science are outstanding.

- Senior managers have created a positive culture and a structure which promote good teaching, a developing curriculum and improvements in pupils' attainment.
- The science department is led by a thoroughly well-organised, thoughtful and well-qualified coordinator.
- Continuing professional development for teachers in the sciences is organised well. Support for assessment is particularly good.
- Two teachers have degrees in science or mathematics and together they successfully support the curriculum needs of all the staff.
- Specialist resources for science are good. There is adequate specialist equipment for investigations and classrooms are large, decorated well and provide good learning environments.
- Teaching assistants are well qualified and experienced and deployed effectively to support the pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving attainment at Key Stage 1
- continuing to develop APP 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

Alex Falconer
Her Majesty's Inspector