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Mrs C Hamilton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hamilton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

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

- Attainment at Key Stage 1 is broadly at national averages. School data show that pupils who had intervention following diagnosis of special educational needs made at least as good progress as their peers.
- National test data show attainment in science to be good. In 2009, all the pupils attained Level 4 or better and 40% attained Level 5.

- Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is good. Boys make the same progress as girls and no group, by ethnicity or ability, makes less progress than any other.
- Work in science lessons is of a good standard and the pupils use a good range of recording, analysis and writing in their science books.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is very good. They listen well to each other, cooperate well and work with enthusiasm.
- The pupils speak enthusiastically about their science studies and express themselves with growing confidence as they progress through the key stages. In addition, they are beginning to use appropriate scientific vocabulary confidently.

Quality of teaching in science

Teaching and learning in science are good, with some outstanding characteristics.

- All four science lessons observed were good.
- Teachers are confident and plan their lessons effectively. They have created a positive, supportive learning environment in their classrooms and manage their pupils' behaviour well.
- The pace of work in science is good and the pupils show enthusiasm for the activities.
- In those lessons with outstanding characteristics, well-resourced and interesting activities thoroughly engaged the pupils. Most of all, the differentiated activities allowed all pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers' good, and sometimes outstanding, use of information and communication technology (ICT) enlivens starter activities and supports concept development. Occasionally, however, some starter activities are too long and the main activity has less impact.
- Science lessons are resourced well and teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teaching assistants are well qualified and deployed effectively to ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress.
- Assessment is good, well organised and moderated. Pupils' progress is monitored well and, in particular, photographs are used very well to record outcomes.
- Pupils, especially those in Key Stage 2, talk confidently about the progress they make in science, the levels of attainment they have reached and the support that teachers give them on how to improve.

Quality of the science curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum has been developed well, is inclusive and meets the pupils' needs.
- The QCA materials have been modified extensively into good short- and medium-term schemes of work. National Curriculum topics are covered well. The use of the International Primary Curriculum has developed and enhanced the science curriculum overall.

- Assessment by testing is integrated well into the teaching of topics.
- Good cross-curricular links with ICT are in place and the school has extensive links to science-based ICT across the borough.
- Subject enrichment is good and there is an extensive range of visits and fieldtrips to help engage and enthuse the pupils.
- The school has a good emphasis on ecology. Gardening and recycling are an integral part of the pupils' experience at the school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- Senior managers fully support science and demonstrate their commitment to its development.
- The newly appointed science coordinator is well-qualified and well-organised. She is supported well by the senior management team.
- Specialist resources for science are good. The classrooms are welcoming and create good learning environments.
- Although none of the teachers has a specialist degree in the sciences, they are confident in their science knowledge.
- The school has recently organised its own science training for teachers. No member of staff has taken part in external science training over the past few years. Plans are, however, in place for the science coordinator to attend training led by the local authority.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and are managed well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to raise attainment at Key Stage 1
- developing a programme of relevant continuing professional development for staff.

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