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Mrs P Derham
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Derham

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29 September 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; the range of learning experiences; the status and use of scientific enquiry; and how science works.

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 the headteacher, science leader, pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is outstanding.

- Standards at the end of Year 6 are high with almost three quarters of pupils attaining the higher Level 5.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school. All groups of pupils make similar progress with the exception of the small number of pupils of White or Black Caribbean ethnicity. Their progress is slightly below that of their peers.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to the effective support they receive in lessons.
- Pupils enjoy learning and apply themselves diligently in lessons. They willingly become involved in the activities arranged for them by teachers.
- The behaviour of pupils, in the lessons observed, was excellent.

Quality of teaching of science

The quality of teaching of science is good.

- All the lessons seen during this visit were good or better.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about teaching science. The praise and encouragement they give pupils contributes positively to the good relationships seen in lesson.
- The lessons observed contained a range of interesting activities that actively engaged pupils in learning.
- Lessons are planned and managed well. This ensures that pupils work at a good pace.
- Teachers make effective use of questioning to check and develop pupils' learning.
- Pupils' work is marked well and clear advice is given to pupils about what they need to do to improve. However, opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and progress have not yet been fully exploited in science.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The curriculum for science is good.

- The science curriculum has a clear and successful focus on encouraging pupils' sense of enquiry and curiosity.
- The curriculum has been mapped well against the National Curriculum requirements and all aspects of the statutory programme of study are covered.
- Opportunities for pupils to plan and carry out investigations are integrated well into the curriculum. This promotes pupils' learning and enjoyment of science.
- The school has moved to a more thematic approach to curriculum planning in Year 1. Science is now delivered to this year group through contexts that are more relevant to pupils. This is helping to ease the transition of pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1 and is also having a positive impact on learning. Sensible plans are in place to

extend this thematic approach to the curriculum into the other year groups in the school.

- A range of science-related trips and visitors to the school enhance pupils' experience of science. However, this is an area the school would like to develop further.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- Expectations of pupils' progress in science are high in the school. The headteacher plays an important role in maintaining a focus on science and the part it can play in developing pupils' sense of enquiry and exploration of the world around them.
- The attainment of pupils in science is assessed regularly using both tests and teacher assessments. In the past these assessments have focused on pupils' knowledge and understanding of science rather than their development of scientific skills of enquiry. Good plans are being developed to assess scientific enquiry skills more systematically.
- A good system to track pupils' progress is in place. Underperforming pupils are identified and provided with effective support in lessons.
- Turbulence in the leadership and management of science over the past year has meant there has been little monitoring of teaching and learning. There is also no system to share and hence develop the good science teaching in the school. The new science coordinator recognises the need to address this issue.
- The headteacher and the new science coordinator have a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of science. Good plans are in place for further development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing an organised programme of lesson observation and a system to share and develop the good science teaching in the school
- developing the systems for assessing pupils' progress in science; placing a greater emphasis on the assessment of scientific enquiry skills and the use of teacher assessment to determine pupils' level of knowledge and understanding.

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