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Mr I Trafford
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Dear Mr Trafford

Ofsted survey inspection programme: Science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 October 2009, to look at work in science. As outlined in the 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 to investigate 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is outstanding.

- Pupils start in the Early Years Foundation stage with attainment that is just below the expected levels for their age. They make excellent progress and reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Almost all pupils reach the expected Level 4, with three quarters of them reaching the higher Level 5.
- The different groups of pupils in the school are also achieving well.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very good support. They reach high standards with nearly all making two levels of progress in science from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

- As a result of a strong emphasis on investigative science, pupils develop good experimental skills and are keen participants in lessons, approaching their work with obvious enthusiasm.
- Behaviour in science is exemplary and pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Science makes an important contribution to developing pupils' knowledge of how to keep safe and adopt a healthy lifestyle. This starts at an early age where pupils in Reception enjoy the 'Ourselves' topic.
- Science is valued for the important contribution it makes to pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. This is enhanced by very good extension activities that take science outside the classroom.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

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

- Teachers' relationships with pupils are excellent, with high levels of trust and mutual respect, that produce a very positive learning environment.
- Teachers are skilled in using questioning to encourage pupils to explore their own ideas and develop their understanding of scientific concepts.
- Lessons are planned to cover a very good range of learning experiences that encourage pupils to be actively involved in their science learning.
- There is a clear focus on developing literacy through science.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) very well in their lessons and pupils make good use of computers to support their learning.
- Assessment is used well to support learning, although this is stronger in Key Stage 1 than Key Stage 2. Pupils' science work books are marked and corrected well. However, the marking in some books needs to be more diagnostic and give pupils better feedback on how to improve their work.
- Teachers work hard to ensure teaching meets the needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes. They recognise the need to take extra care that work is appropriate to pupils' different ages and levels of development.
- Learning is supported well by skilled and experienced teaching assistants who are valued members of the teaching team.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage has an excellent focus on independent activities that allow pupils to explore, make predictions and investigate.

Quality of the curriculum of science

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school's own scheme of work has been in place for some time, and is now being re-designed to introduce a more creative approach to science and the wider curriculum.
- Scientific enquiry is thoroughly integrated into the curriculum and is raising the level of pupils' investigative skills.
- The science curriculum is visible around the school through some excellent displays of pupils' work.
- Very good extra-curricular activities provide a valuable extension to the curriculum. In particular, the school environment is used to very good effect. Activities such as pond-dipping and the green club are very popular.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are outstanding.

- Science is very well led with an excellent emphasis on maintaining an investigative approach to science. There is clear continuity in planning science across the curriculum to promote creativity.
- The new curriculum leader receives very good support from her predecessors. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of science and know where improvements can be made.
- All subjects are reviewed on a regular basis, supported by the day-to-day monitoring of science in lessons.
- Pupils' progress is tracked and monitored to give a good overview of achievement and progress that can be tracked from one year to the next as pupils move through the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making sure that marking of pupils' work, especially in Key Stage 2, is more diagnostic and gives pupils guidance on how to improve their work.

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