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Mrs V Farby
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Farby

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 October 2009 to look at work in science.

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; short visits to Foundation Stage; and observation of parts of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Standards were broadly average between 2006 and 2008. They improved in 2009 to above average.
- Between 2006 and 2008, achievement was inadequate.
- Evidence from lessons and from the Key Stage 2 results in 2009 shows that achievement is now satisfactory.
- In lessons, pupils make at least satisfactory progress, and in some cases good progress.

- Scrutiny of pupils' work from the academic year 2008 to 2009 showed much to be of a good standard. However, work from upper Key Stage 2 since September 2009 was broadly average.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Many pupils are confident and articulate and collaborate with each other well.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory.

- Teachers are supportive and encouraging and take great care to establish good relationships with their pupils. There are high levels of trust and respect in classrooms and around the school. There is a positive environment for learning.
- Teachers make some effective use of question and answer to establish prior knowledge, check understanding and encourage pupils to think about their learning. However, on occasions, introductory question and answer sessions are too long.
- Some appropriate use of information and communication technology (ICT) was observed.
- Lesson planning includes references to differentiated activities appropriate to groups of pupils of different abilities.
- Some opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups were observed. This contributes well to their learning.
- Practical sessions are generally managed well and promote good personal development. Most pupils work well cooperatively.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to individuals and groups.
- Many pupils are not clear about the levels they are aiming for, although books from the previous academic year did include target sheets in the front.
- There are regular assessments and the outcomes of these are collated.
- There are inconsistencies in marking. For example, some of the Year 5 and 6 books from the Autumn term had inaccuracies and spelling errors which were not corrected, and a tick at the end of the work. Teachers do not always give enough guidance about how work could be improved.

Quality of the curriculum for science

The curriculum for science is satisfactory with good features.

- The curriculum has been carefully planned to include all the National Curriculum topics taking into account mixed-year-group classes. However, across the school there has been some variation in the quality of the delivery of these.

- There are some appropriate enrichment opportunities, such as the 'Planetarium' visit to school. The science week with a focus on senses provided some good opportunities for practical and experimental work.
- Many cross-curricular visits have relevance to science, such as a recent visit to the National Railway Museum.
- Some teachers are beginning to develop an emphasis on the skills of scientific enquiry providing their pupils with suitable opportunities to develop their understanding of scientific principles through investigations.
- In the Foundation Stage, there is a range of activities for pupils to explore and develop their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- The school has had some success in improving outcomes in science as the 2009 results demonstrate. More emphasis in teaching on the skills of scientific enquiry, and booster classes taught by you were factors in this improvement.
- You have a good understanding of relevant issues in science.
- A new science coordinator takes up her post in November 2009. She is enthusiastic, and recognises the need to develop more opportunities for investigative work and to improve pupils' understanding of scientific terminology.
- There has been some recent professional development for teachers in science. More training for the new coordinator is planned, including some through the Science Learning Centre.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the marking policy is clear and is adhered to, particularly in terms of:
 - spelling errors
 - inaccuracies
 - guidance on how work can be improved
- providing appropriate support and training for the new science coordinator
- continuing to develop the curriculum for all pupils, focusing on investigative work, use of scientific terminology and cross-curricular links.

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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector