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Mrs J Green
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Green

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 November 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Pupils start school in Year 3 with attainment that is overall just below average. However, this can vary significantly from year to year with different groups of pupils.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress. While standards at the end of Year 6 in 2009 were below average, more pupils made the expected level of progress in science than in other subjects.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English make good progress due to the good support they receive.
- There are some differences in the attainment of boys and girls. This varies from year to year and there is no clear pattern in performance of different gender groups.
- Pupils' investigative skills are improving as science teaching is more focused on practical activities. Pupils are enthusiastic about their science, confident in following instructions and good at organising themselves in group work.
- Behaviour in science sessions is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They are ready to voice their opinions and give their answers, encouraged by teachers' careful use of probing questions.
- Pupils produce a good standard of written work that shows a range of different activities and covers all aspects of the science curriculum.
- Science is valued for the important contribution it makes to pupils' learning and life outside the classroom.

Quality of teaching in science

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

- Teaching is improving as lesson planning moves towards a more creative approach. This is aimed at emphasising practical and investigative activities that are more interesting and relevant to the pupils' needs.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and this produces a positive learning environment.
- Assessment is used appropriately to support learning. Teachers are more confident in assessing pupils' work in science as a result of the recent staff training on assessment and levelling work.
- Pupils' science workbooks are marked regularly. Marking in some pupils' books needs to be more diagnostic and give them better feedback on how to improve their work.
- Teachers use information and communication technology well in their lessons and pupils make appropriate use of computers to help their learning.
- Learning is supported well by skilled teaching assistants who are valued members of the teaching team.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum is currently based on QCA schemes of work to ensure all areas of the science National Curriculum are covered. The

whole-school curriculum is being redesigned to introduce a more creative approach and science can be identified in many of the themes.

- The school has trialled longer and less frequent blocks of time for science which has proved very successful. Staff and pupils like being able to complete investigations from theoretical development to final practical outcomes over a more condensed timescale. This approach has strengthened pupils' investigative skills and is being extended to more areas of science.
- Science makes a strong contribution to the whole-school mixed-age Friday afternoon 'pick-n-mix' activities. These are chosen by the pupils, for example 'baking' and 'gardening' and science activities are included in the planning.
- The school does not yet organise a science week or other science themed activities, although science open afternoons have encouraged family learning in science where parents work alongside their children.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- Science is led well with a good emphasis on maintaining an investigative approach to science.
- The science leader has a clear view of the quality of science teaching in all classes through regular joint monitoring of teaching with you.
- Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and underachievement identified through the whole-school systems to ensure they receive support that is designed to meet their needs.
- The science leader has devised a good system for monitoring performance in investigative science using 'skill ladders' to assess and moderate judgements.
- Targets set for pupils' performance in science are challenging and used effectively to raise achievement.
- The science leader is preparing an application for the Primary Science Quality Mark, silver award.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that marking is more diagnostic and gives pupils guidance on how to improve their work
- improving the consistency of science teaching to ensure it is always good in all classes
- considering the planning and introduction of a science week with an emphasis on consolidating understanding in the more difficult areas of science, such as forces.

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