

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr R Tollyfield  
Headteacher  
Ruislip Gardens Primary School  
Stafford Road  
Ruislip  
HA4 6PD

Dear Mr Tollyfield

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 22 January 2010 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 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- The overall attainment of pupils entering the school is just below the expected levels for their age. They make satisfactory progress overall and, by the end of Year 6, reach standards that are not significantly different from those reached both locally and nationally.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress owing to the good support they receive. Girls, particularly those of average ability, do not make as much progress as boys.
- Analysis of information on the performance of current Year 6 pupils indicates that progress is improving and they are set to reach higher standards.

- Behaviour in science sessions is very good. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning, are keen to do well and are ready to voice their opinions and give their answers. They are enthusiastic scientists and are confident in organising themselves in group work and other activities.

### Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good with high levels of trust and mutual respect that produce a positive learning environment.
- Good lesson planning ensures a range and variety of activities that the pupils find stimulating and interesting. While there is an emphasis on practical activities, these are not always linked to the appropriate investigative skills and opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to carry out investigations independently.
- Teachers make good use of questioning in lessons to explore and develop pupils' understanding of scientific ideas.
- Pupils' written work shows a good variety of activities covering the National Curriculum. Books are marked regularly. However, some of the comments and feedback need to be more diagnostic and give pupils better feedback on how to improve the standard of their work.
- Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well in their lessons to support pupils' learning and this is thoroughly embedded in everyday classroom practice.
- Learning is supported well by skilled and experienced teaching assistants who are valued members of the teaching team.

### Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The science curriculum has a suitable emphasis on developing pupils' interests and enthusiasm for science. The curriculum has been based on the QCA schemes of work but the school is moving away from these and adapting the planning to meet their pupils' needs more appropriately.
- The science curriculum is visible around the school through some good displays of pupils' work.
- Practical work is an important part of the curriculum and pupils enjoy this aspect of their work. However, curriculum planning does not make clear the difference between practical activities that exemplify scientific concepts and full investigations that allow pupils to work independently by investigating their own ideas and predictions.
- Science is supported well by an exciting range of clubs and other activities. The astronomy club is particularly successful and pupils are frequently taken on science themed school trips. Visiting specialists, such as a local dental technician, are used well to support and enhance the curriculum.

The school has ambitious, well-advanced plans for developing the school grounds and take learning outside of the classroom.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in science is good.

- The coordinator is an enthusiastic leader who is keen to maintain science as a high profile subject in the school.
- Regular review ensures that the evaluation of science provision and outcomes give a good view of the strengths and areas for development in science.
- Pupils' progress is regularly tracked and monitored to give a good overview that can be monitored from one year to the next as pupils move through the school.
- The science coordinator attends regular external science courses and uses this training to lead in-house sessions appropriate to the needs of the other teachers.
- The science coordinator is currently preparing to apply for an eco-schools green flag award and then intends to apply for the primary science quality mark.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the role of investigative science to ensure no opportunities are missed for turning ordinary practical activities into real investigations that develop and extend pupils' practical skills
- ensuring marking is informative and gives pupils more detailed feedback on what they need to do to improve the quality and standard of 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