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Mr K Harvey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Harvey

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 19 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 monitoring the impact of recent initiatives and investigating 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, a governor and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Pupils' attainments are above national averages and their progress is satisfactory. At Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment has been above the national average for the past three years. Of particular note are the achievements of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who make progress in science above that predicted by their prior attainment.
- Overall, however, progress in science is satisfactory and pupils achieve in line with predicted levels. Boys make slightly better progress than girls and no group by ethnicity makes more progress than any other.

- Work in science lessons is of a good standard and pupils are using a good range of recording, analysis and writing in their science books.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is very good. They listen well to each other, cooperate well and work with enthusiasm in science.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about their work in science and express themselves with growing confidence as they mature. In addition, they are beginning to confidently use appropriate scientific and technical terms.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Teachers are confident and plan their lessons effectively. The pace of learning in science is good and the pupils' enthusiasm for the activities is obvious.
- Teaching assistants provide highly effective support for a range of pupils in the science lessons.
- In the best lessons, challenging and interesting investigations allow the children to explore scientific ideas and to add real experiences to their developing understanding of scientific concepts.
- Teachers use question and answer very effectively to probe pupils' understanding and they leave space for them to explain their ideas.
- However, some activities were planned as demonstrations by the teachers which could have been organised as activities for the pupils. This was partly due to lack of space in classrooms and a concern for safe working. Thorough risk assessment and imaginative use of nearby spaces could have resulted in safe and more active learning by the pupils.
- Assessment is good, well organised and moderated. Pupils' progress is tracked and monitored well.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and usually contains appropriate and encouraging comments. However, some marking is not focused enough on how pupils might improve.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The science curriculum is well developed, inclusive and meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school. Pupils of all abilities enjoy learning science and taking part in investigations.
- The QCA science materials have been thoughtfully modified into good short- and medium-term schemes of work. Topics have been arranged to facilitate the transition from Year 2 to Year 3 and from Year 6 to secondary school.
- 'How science works' and investigative work are embedded well in the science curriculum and National Curriculum topics are fully covered.

- Good cross-curricular links with other subjects are in place and the pupils recently thoroughly enjoyed using their knowledge in science and design technology to make electronic Christmas decorations.
- Enrichment for science is a key strength. A wide range of trips, visits and activities is planned and carried out to enthuse the pupils and to broaden their horizons. The school collaborates well with local schools, both infant and secondary, to facilitate transition. In addition, a local pharmaceutical company and the Atomic Weapons Establishment collaborate well with the school to provide some funding for science equipment and competitions.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- Science has the full support of senior managers and governors of the school. Curriculum developments have been effectively supported by the provision of resources and development time.
- The science curriculum is led very well by a well-qualified and experienced science coordinator. Currently, another teacher is shadowing the coordinator with a view to assuming full responsibility in the near future. He is being mentored and supported well in developing into this new role.
- The science coordinator regularly attends professional development sessions relevant to her responsibilities. However, science-related continuing professional development has tended to be 'in-house' recently and teachers have, over the past few years, experienced little external science updating.
- Specialist resources for science are good. The classrooms are welcoming and constitute attractive learning environments. Class sizes do, however, restrict the range and scope of science activities that can comfortably take place.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to help pupils make progress in science lessons and are managed well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to improve pupils' progress in science to match the progress they make in English
- ensuring that marking focuses on how pupils can improve
- planning investigative work that maximises pupils' involvement while taking into account the size of the classrooms and safety considerations
- arranging appropriate science topic updates for teachers who are not science specialists.

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

Alex Falconer
Her Majesty's Inspector