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Mrs A Fleming
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fleming

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 17 May 2010 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Attainment is above average. In 2009, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in national tests was above average. The proportion achieving Level 5 was slightly below average.
- Contextual value-added data show that for the three years up to 2009 pupils made slower than average progress in science during Key Stage 2. School data for the current Year 6 indicate improving progress during Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' science work is recorded in their topic books. In the Year 6 books, the volume of science work is limited and there are relatively few examples of investigative work. Year 4 books include a wider range of investigative activities.

- In pupils' books, there were few examples of work enabling them to demonstrate their scientific understanding or of longer pieces of written work. Books included some content-based theoretical material of an inappropriate level. Examples included a diagram of the structure of the heart labelled with technical terms, a leaf key using advanced terminology and a list of the characteristics of different groups of invertebrates. For specific year groups, the same or very similar exercises were found in the books of pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning in science lessons and they work well together. They value opportunities to explore their own ideas.
- In the lessons observed, pupils made at least satisfactory, and in some cases better, progress especially in applying the principles of a fair testing and in practical skills.
- Behaviour is very good. Pupils are polite and aware of the needs of others. They readily help each other.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationships with their pupils. They are encouraging and enthusiastic. Levels of trust and respect, in classrooms and around the school, are high. The environment for learning is positive.
- In the lessons observed, pupils had some good opportunities to explore their own ideas and carry out investigations. This helps to promote the enjoyment of science.
- Teachers' planning and delivery do not always take account of the different ages and abilities of pupils in their classes. Consequently, the work set is not always at an appropriate level.
- Teachers make some effective use of question and answer to establish prior knowledge, check understanding and encourage pupils to think about their learning.
- Groups for practical activities are often large and, as a result, sometimes pupils have to watch and wait while others carry out tasks. Nevertheless, pupils behave sensibly and cooperate well.
- Teaching assistants generally provide appropriate support for individuals and groups. However, on occasion in the lessons observed, teaching assistants did too much for pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The science curriculum is incorporated into themed topics in the creative curriculum, which provide opportunities to make links between science and other subjects.

- Teachers' planning shows examples of imaginative activities to aid understanding of science, such as a drama activity to illustrate the circulation of the blood.
- Little use of information and communication technology was observed in lessons or in pupils' work.
- Although some opportunities for pupils to undertake investigative work exist, the amount undertaken by different year groups varies.
- The curriculum is enriched in a range of ways including visitors to the school and visits.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- The science coordinator adopts a conscientious and thorough approach to managing the subject. Her monitoring includes lesson observations, scrutiny of planning and discussions with pupils.
- The school's own evaluation of the quality of provision in science did not take sufficient account of the contextual value-added progress data which showed that pupils made slow progress in science during Key Stage 2 between 2007 and 2009.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that planning and teaching enable pupils in all year groups to undertake an appropriate range of investigative work, especially in Key Stage 2
- ensuring that the activities and work set in science lessons are appropriate to the range of ages and abilities of the pupils.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector