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Ms A Smyth
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Smyth

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 5 July 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 without their consent.

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.

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result of the small size of year groups, children's level of knowledge and understanding of the world around them varies from year to year. However, it is at least in line with that expected for their age by the time they leave the Reception class.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is similar to the national average. Attainment improved in 2009 with a large increase in the percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 5.
- The progress made by pupils between Years 1 and 6 is satisfactory and improving. This improvement is in large part a result of pupils being given greater opportunity to design and carry out their own investigations.

- All groups of pupils make similar progress in science.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and behave extremely well during science lessons. They speak with enthusiasm about the increasing amount of investigative work they have undertaken in recent years.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Pupils value the good relationships they have with their teachers and find them approachable, helpful and supportive.
- All the lessons observed were based around engaging activities that had a clear focus on developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry.
- Teachers are now allowing pupils to develop and test their own ideas in science more effectively than was seen at the time of the previous school inspection.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about teaching science.
- Teachers make effective use of paired and group work to develop successfully pupils' skills of collaborative working.
- Questioning is used well by teachers to check and develop pupils' understanding of scientific concepts.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The curriculum has been developed effectively over the past two years to allow a greater focus on investigative work.
- The curriculum has also been planned skilfully to ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding of science are developed through topics which make interesting and meaningful links with other subjects.
- The two-year planning cycle for mixed-age classes has been well mapped against the National Curriculum requirements and all aspects of the statutory programme of study are covered.
- Opportunities to use information and communication technology to support learning in science are built into the curriculum. However, opportunities to use data-logging equipment are limited.
- A broad range of trips and activities and effective use of the outside environment enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment of science.
- Medium-term curriculum planning does not systematically identify how activities can be adapted to provide greater challenge for more able pupils.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is satisfactory.

- Some staffing instability in the leadership of science over the past few years has affected the speed with which some developments have moved forward in the subject.
- The science leader has established a positive ethos for learning in the subject. Activities such as the recent science week have ensured that science has a prominent position in the school's activities.
- Systems of monitoring and evaluation are sound and leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in science. However, the subject leader is not yet involved in monitoring the quality of teaching through lesson observations.
- Pupils' attainment in science is being assessed regularly by teachers but centrally collected only once a year to track pupils' progress. The science leader has rightly identified the need to simplify the assessment process and collect information more regularly. This will enable underachieving pupils to be quickly identified and provided with effective support. Good plans are in place to introduce a new system of assessment from September 2010.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a simpler, more regular system for tracking pupils' progress so that underachieving pupils can be identified quickly and provided with additional support
- ensuring that curriculum planning identifies systematically how activities will be adapted to provide greater challenge for more able pupils.

I hope that 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

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector