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Ms J Doonan
Headteacher
St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School
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Dear Ms Doonan

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 20 September 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 good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and understanding of the world is below the level expected for their age.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is similar to the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their skills of scientific enquiry and their knowledge and understanding of science.
- All groups of pupils including those from different minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language, make similar progress.

- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in their learning as a result of the effective support they receive in lessons.
- Pupils enjoy science and talk positively about the range of investigations they have carried out. They willingly become involved in activities arranged for them by their teachers. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the teaching of science.
- Lessons are planned well and structured around clear learning outcomes for pupils. They contain a range of interesting, engaging activities.
- Lessons are characterised by good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are given positive encouragement and this raises their self-esteem and enjoyment effectively.
- Teachers use questioning well to explore and develop pupils' understanding of scientific ideas.
- Pupils know their targets and teachers' marking gives them helpful advice about how to improve their work.
- On a few occasions, teachers talk for too long and this slows the pace of the lesson.
- In some lessons, the tasks set do not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is outstanding.

- The curriculum is clearly focused on developing pupils' sense of curiosity, their skills of scientific enquiry and their enjoyment of science.
- The curriculum is structured carefully and ensures systematic progression in developing pupils' learning and skills extremely well.
- The school has an interesting thematic approach to curriculum planning. Science is delivered within these themes through contexts that are interesting and relevant to pupils.
- Lesson plans make effective links with learning in other subjects particularly literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.

- A range of science-based trips, the school science week and the science club effectively broaden pupils' experience and learning of the subject.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- Senior staff and the science leader have high expectations of pupils and this is reflected in the challenging targets that are set for them.
- Leaders and managers are committed to ensuring that every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed and is not in any way disadvantaged. To help achieve this aim, an excellent tracking system has been established. The progress of individuals and groups of pupils is monitored regularly and effective action taken to support those who are underachieving.
- The subject leader monitors the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes extremely well through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and analysis of attainment data. As a result, she has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. A good plan is in place to tackle those areas in need of improvement.
- Pupils' attainment in science is assessed well through a combination of tests and teacher assessments.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' progress to outstanding by effectively sharing the good and outstanding teaching practice so that all lessons proceed at a fast pace and provide sufficient levels of challenge for the most 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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector