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Ms K Bannon
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Bannon

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 8 November 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 outstanding.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Children start school with skills which are well below those expected for their age, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Although they make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and understanding of the world is still below that expected for their age by the time they leave the Reception class.
- Pupils' progress in science increases as they move through Years 1 to 6 and is outstanding overall. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in science is similar to the national average.
- All groups of pupils, including boys and girls and those from different minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language, make similar progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress due to the very effective targeted support that they receive.

- Pupils enjoy science and talk enthusiastically about the range of investigations that they have performed. Their behaviour in lessons is outstanding. They respond willingly to opportunities to take responsibility and work extremely well both individually and in groups.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is outstanding.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to plan lessons around clear learning outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers use their knowledge of pupils' prior attainment in science very effectively to plan activities that are suited well to the abilities of all the pupils in their class.
- New ideas and concepts are introduced to pupils through activities that are engaging and relevant to their lives.
- Lessons proceed at a fast pace because teachers have high expectations, are energetic and enthusiastic and pupils respond readily to the instructions that they are given.
- Teachers make very effective use of questioning to both check and develop pupils' understanding of scientific ideas and concepts.
- Pupils talk positively about the support and help that they receive from staff.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is outstanding.

- Science is delivered effectively through relevant contexts within whole-school imaginative topics that capture pupils' interest and engagement.
- The curriculum is structured carefully and ensures systematic progression in the development of pupils' learning in key scientific ideas and skills extremely well.
- Medium term schemes of work are based around clear learning outcomes for pupils. Although these schemes suggest activities and tasks for pupils to perform, teachers have sufficient flexibility to adapt these plans to better meet the needs and interests of the pupils in their class.
- The curriculum is clearly focused on developing pupils' sense of curiosity and enquiry. Opportunities for pupils to carry out scientific investigations are integrated well into the curriculum.
- Very effective use is made of local resources to enliven the science curriculum. For example, visits are made to the Science Museum in London, the Natural History Museum and Kew Gardens, and the school works with local organisations such as 'The orchestra of the age of enlightenment'.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- You and the science leader have high expectations of pupils and this is reflected in the challenging targets that are set for them.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluation are exemplary. The subject leader and senior leaders monitor science lessons, pupils' work and pupils' progress data extremely thoroughly.
- Monitoring information is evaluated very well and the subject leader has a clear and accurate picture of the strengths and areas in need of development in science. Good plans are in place to drive further improvement.
- Pupils' progress is monitored very effectively using a central electronic system. Underachieving pupils are identified and provided with additional support.
- The subject leader keeps up-to-date with current developments in science education. For example, the school is currently adopting a new national scheme to improve the assessment of pupils' attainment in science. This scheme is being introduced well but is at an early stage of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to introduce the new assessment scheme in line with the school's plans.

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