

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



23 March 2011

Mr M Dakin
Headteacher
St Giles Church of England Primary School
Walsall Street
Willenhall
West Midlands
WV13 2ER

Dear Mr Dakin

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 11 March 2011 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 you and staff; 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.

- Pupils make consistently good progress from below average starting points. Although relatively few pupils reach the higher Level 5 by the end of Key Stage 2, nearly all pupils reach the national expectation by 11 years. This includes the many pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and from minority ethnic backgrounds where English is not their first language.
- Children's knowledge and understanding of science are developed very well in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Throughout the school, pupils enjoy science and are enthusiastic about their learning. Their behaviour in lessons is excellent.
- Science makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. They cooperate well when undertaking investigations and research, promoting their social development. Spiritual development is enhanced as the wonders of their world are explored through science and as they

experience the joy of discovery. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities work successfully together in their science groups.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- In the lessons seen, teachers demonstrated good generic teaching skills and had high expectations of their pupils. Lessons were well planned, prepared and resourced. Information and communication technology was used well. Teaching assistants played an important role in teaching, usually, but not exclusively, supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The marking and assessment of pupils' work are excellent and there is a genuine dialogue between teachers and pupils when work is evaluated.
- In relation to the teaching of science, teachers ensure that pupils are actively engaged in investigations and research. Teachers are effective questioners; pupils are required to explain their thinking, enabling teachers to judge pupils' levels of understanding. Questioning was very effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where, in addition, the creation of imaginative learning opportunities meant children were developing a real interest in exploring the world around them.
- No significant weaknesses in teaching were observed. However, at times, too much was done for pupils in planning and setting up investigations and recording was often prescribed and lacking in invention.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good, overall.

- The curriculum in science meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. It is broad and balanced.
- Schemes of work in science are interesting and tasks are practical in nature, as was clearly evident in the lessons and through an examination of pupils' workbooks. The curriculum is increasingly focused on developing the skills of science investigation. Rigorous assessments have been developed to assess each pupil's progress in these skills.
- Outside of English, mathematics and science, the school has adopted a more creative, linked approach to teaching and learning. Although standards in science have not suffered, pupils do not have the fullest opportunities to see the relevance of science and its connections with other subjects, since it is taught discretely.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The tracking of pupils' progress in science and the analysis of the performance of different groups are excellent. They enable senior

managers to take quick action to remedy shortfalls in performance in science.

- Pupils' progress in science is discussed as part of regular meetings between teachers and school leaders.
- Science is treated as a core subject by senior leaders and regularly reviewed. It is managed and led well. The coordinator monitors science in all aspects, including conducting interviews with pupils. The only exception to monitoring activities is the absence of a systematic programme of science observations for each class.
- The coordinator undertakes professional development in science. Recently, there has been a focus on developing the assessment of science skills, although broader curriculum development has continued. The coordinator passes on information about science to her colleagues through staff meetings.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to appreciate the relevance of science to their community and lives through closer links with other subjects
- building on the success of the Early Years Foundation Stage, to extend the opportunities for younger pupils to learn about science through exploration and play and, for older pupils, to provide them with more opportunities to design and prepare investigations for themselves, and to report on them in a variety of ways.

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

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector