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23 May 2011

Mrs V Luniak
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Luniak

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils during my visit on 12 May 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 staff and talking to pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' books; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- At the end of Year 6, pupils are reaching standards that are in line with national expectations. The school's analysis of information on performance shows that just over a quarter of pupils attain the higher Level 5.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school as there is a strong emphasis on the practical aspects of science and pupils respond very well to this approach.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress due to the good support they receive.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to make decisions, raise their own questions, be actively involved in planning investigations and use scientific vocabulary appropriately.

- In lessons, where challenge is high and science is interesting, pupils behave well and have good attitudes towards their learning. When given the opportunity, they are keen to participate and work well independently and in groups.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers plan to make their lessons relevant to pupils' lives and interests with links to appropriate learning objectives. Teachers listen to, and observe pupils during lessons to gain an understanding of how learning is progressing so that they can reshape tasks and explanations to improve progress.
- Planning places a clear emphasis on investigative and practical approaches as teachers know that this is how their pupils can really learn and understand the scientific process. As a result, there is a good variety of learning experiences that encourages pupils to be actively involved.
- Pupils' progress is methodically monitored through assessments that cover investigative skills as well as knowledge and understanding. Marking of work is regular but does not always give pupils enough feedback on the standard of their work and how it could be improved.
- Teachers are careful to challenge and investigate misconceptions. They are skilled at using questioning in lessons to explore and develop pupils' understanding of scientific ideas as well as developing their vocabulary.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The former Qualifications and Curriculum Agency schemes form the basis of the curriculum although these are changed and adapted to meet the school's needs. The curriculum has a clear emphasis on developing pupils' sense of enquiry and curiosity of the world around them.
- The incorporation of literacy and numeracy into science-based work is very good.
- There is a strong emphasis on cross-curricular links with a range of other subjects including design and technology.
- The school is always looking for opportunities to extend science outside of lessons, including an annual science week. The recent 'Mad Science' after-school club was very popular as was the 'parent trail' where pupils and their parents worked on science activities together.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- The subject leader is very effective in leading the development of science. A clear focus is being maintained on the importance of the investigative nature of the subject.
- The senior team is working hard to raise the profile of science and understands the importance of developing teachers' skills and expertise in this area through good subject-specific professional development opportunities.
- Science is an important aspect of the whole-school development planning process. Monitoring and evaluation practices are secure but do not give sufficiently clear guidance on evaluating the impact and future development of improvement strategies.
- The school is working towards achieving the Primary Science Quality Mark and is currently awaiting the outcome of their submission for the Bronze award.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the feedback given to pupils so that they know how to improve the standards and quality of their work
- improving the monitoring and evaluation of science in order to gain a clearer view of the impact of improvement strategies.

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

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector