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Mr P Fowler
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fowler

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 May 2012 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 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- The attainment of pupils as they join the school varies from year to year, typically being lower than average. In science, in all Year groups, and for all groups of pupils, they make consistently good progress, reaching higher than average standards by the end of Year 6. This includes their science practical skills as well as their knowledge and understanding in science.
- Pupils enjoy science. Their use of literacy for writing and speaking confidently about science is a notable strength, as pupils use their creative writing skills to enhance the reporting of research, for example in a recent Year 6 marine life project. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from using the science context to develop their literacy particularly well; as one teacher put it 'you cannot tell they have special needs when they are in science'.

- Pupils cover a lot of scientific content, and do so thoroughly, because teachers ensure that enough time is dedicated to science teaching, including time for revision of subject knowledge in Year 6.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge of science, and in how to use scientific enquiry to engage pupils' interest and intellect. This leads to detailed practical investigations that are well resourced with suitable materials.
- The very best teaching provides tasks and resources carefully matched to pupils' abilities, and makes sure pupils have enough time to carry out the tasks independently, or in collaboration with others. Teachers adjust the pitch and pace of their questioning to match the responses of individual pupils, and allow them to explore their own ideas.
- All classes regularly use information and communication technology (ICT), with teachers routinely incorporating multimedia clips of scientific phenomena. Pupils use interactive whiteboards to draw out their observations, computer programmes to learn keywords, and the internet as a source of research information via Netbooks.
- Occasionally, learning slows because teachers spend too long describing the main ideas, or recapping recent learning, and do not involve every pupil in these discussions.
- Written feedback, including advice and suggestions to pupils about how they may further improve their understanding is usually good, and often demanding, for example 'now describe what darkness is' in a Year 2 book. Pupils are not consistently responding to these suggestions.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is outstanding.

- Dedicated weekly science lessons that are long enough to complete the main investigations have consistently been a strong feature in all year groups over time, including in Year 6. This allows pupils to thoroughly cover the required subject content, and have sufficient time to develop their practical skills.
- Teachers use science ideas as part of developing literacy skills, because they have found pupils respond to the writing demands enthusiastically as they like finding out more about science through literature and online research.
- An extensive, and systematic, programme of trips, visits, fieldwork and visitors guarantees every pupil the same enrichment activity, and begins in Key Stage 1. Pupils remember these activities many years later, and they form an important part of developing pupils understanding of the applications of science in the wider world.

- Other subjects are also linked to science, for example in a study of the Victorian age and the development of hygiene, and in geography through the story of drinking water purification.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- A collegiate approach to leading science via 'phases' works well in ensuring learning progression. The phase structure also ensures collaborative planning of science activities, and of moderation of pupil assessments.
- Teachers monitor progress in science alongside English and mathematics, with clear performance targets on a year by year basis; the assessing pupils' progress (APP) approach is also used to determine how pupils scientific skills are developing, and these data inform lesson planning.
- Teachers have participated in local-authority-based science training in recent years. The school is a lead partner in initial teacher training, which results in many staff having excellent professional development opportunities as they help train new entrants to the profession.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to respond to the good written advice by teachers about extending their learning in science
- further improving the quality of teaching by maximising the time pupils spend on the main investigation and research activities.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector