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Mrs Boyce
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Boyce

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit 27 March 2007 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff, talking with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in science is good.

- There has been an overall improvement in achievement of pupils over the past three years, considering the starting point of the pupils and when compared to other similar schools.
- In science in 2006 pupils were showing achievement just above the national average.
- The science performance is above the national average for levels 3 and 5, and on the average for level 4. However, this is a small school, and the statistics are less reliable indicators of performance.
- The outcomes of national tests show no significant variation in performance by different groups.

- In class the knowledge and understanding shown by pupils are generally above that expected for their age.
- Pupils are showing significant personal development, acting responsibly, working collaboratively, and showing confidence and enjoyment in their work and in speaking to adults.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- All the teaching seen was good and some had outstanding features.
- Good planning underpins the good teaching.
- There is a good focus on investigative science and encouraging pupils to work in scientific ways.
- Teachers consistently provide good challenge to pupils through appropriate interventions.
- Questioning and answering are a significant component of all lessons, and are used well to check pupils' understanding and to elicit their ideas.
- Some good examples of formative feedback are seen, but other areas of good practice in assessment for learning are less evident.
- Pupils show they can work collaboratively and they exhibit high levels of involvement and application.
- Teachers and pupils have very good relationships and teachers provide good role models for pupils, setting good examples of respect and care.
- The plan to use 'tracker' software is a clear priority that will support monitoring performance of pupils and usefully inform planning of teachers.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Planning for small year groups and mixed age classes is demanding, but the school has a robust planning strategy that avoids repetition but provides reinforcement of science ideas previously encountered.
- The coverage of the National Curriculum is secure in the long and medium term planning.
- Teachers are free to innovate and plan in the short term for the needs of their pupils, and this they do well. Teachers are providing relevant contexts and engaging activities in science.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not well developed for use by pupils, but some good practice was seen in the way teachers use, for example, the interactive whiteboard.
- The creative curriculum, as seen in the topic work introduced into Key Stage 1, is a strength and makes the content of different subject areas more accessible to pupils.

- The school is rightly looking to enrich the experience of pupils by linking with other local schools and using facilities beyond the confines of their own school.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The areas for improvement in science are systematically identified.
- Under current management standards are rising.
- The strong knowledge and understanding of science is being well deployed to the benefit of pupils.
- Good overall planning by the co-ordinator is underpinning the success of teaching.
- The belief in the significance of investigative science is seen in practice throughout the teaching.
- Self evaluation of the science work in the school is effective.
- Efforts to spread good practice would be enhanced by a more frequent and systematic peer observation of teaching.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- There is a clear culture of inclusion in the school and scrutiny of data and classroom observation gave no evidence of inadequate progress of any group.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing greater use of ICT by pupils in science
- fully implementing assessment for learning techniques
- introducing the use of 'tracker' software to monitor progress of pupils more effectively.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector