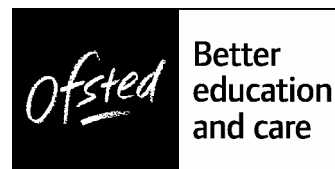


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07 March 2007

Mr Norman Duffin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Duffin

Ofsted 2006-07 survey inspection programme – science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 06 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. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with three staff and two groups of pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of 7 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of the subject, science, is good with some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in science are very good.

- Pupils in the Nursery have broadly average skills, with fewer at the extremes of the range than are found nationally.
- In Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of science are above average; so too are their social and general literacy skills. There is consistently strong progress made by pupils as they move through the school. By Year 6, achievement in science is generally very good.
- In 2005, science results in national tests at age 11 were very high and on the edge of the top ten percent nationally for improvement since age 7. Nearly three quarters of the year group achieved the highest National Curriculum level for Key Stage 2 (Level 5). Results were

weaker in 2006 because some pupils who had potential for Level 5 did not achieve it; results were better in English and mathematics.

- Pupils' personal development is at least good, and in many cases outstanding. Pupils present themselves confidently and with clarity of speech in discussion with a visitor. Older pupils conduct themselves with composure and show eagerness for learning.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good.

- Lessons seen were generally very good and occasionally outstanding. Lessons seen were characterised by very good relationships and excellent cooperation between pupils in team work on science investigations. Literacy is generally strong throughout the school and this facilitates effective progress in science. There is often a good match of science work to pupils' needs, though pupils of a wide range of ability often work together on the same tasks. The consistently high quality of teaching through the school is a very significant strength.
- Marking is excellent. There is painstaking correction of misconceptions in science and errors in spelling, together with appropriate encouragement.
- The school is using an assessment scheme promoted by the local authority. This is helpful in enabling teachers to clarify exactly how much pupils understand about the science topics they have covered. However, there is spurious variation in the National Curriculum levels recorded for pupils. For older pupils, there is less assessment with the type of questions found in the national Key Stage 2 tests than is usual in schools. In 2006, some pupils who might have reached Level 5 in national tests fell short of that level. This possibility was not identified by the school's assessment procedures; consequently it was not tackled effectively in the lead up to the national tests.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- The curriculum is coherently organised and is closely linked to National Curriculum units of work. It is informed by the judicious use of two commercial learning schemes and other materials. This enables teachers to draw on imaginative approaches to the subject and eases the burden of lesson preparation.
- Work in science gives very good opportunity for the consolidation and extension of literacy and numeracy. There is a strong focus on the vocabulary of science; teachers ensure that pupils make new words their own. For instance, in the Nursery, pupils who had listened to the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' were able to use the word 'pupae' with confidence.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The science course throughout the school is organised coherently and appropriate use is made of commercial and other resources. Very occasionally, additional resources might have been useful in lessons seen, for example, to illustrate weathering of rocks or the nature of seeds in relation to ways of dispersal.
- There is a rolling programme for monitoring lessons and pupils' work, with helpful feedback to teachers.
- The science co-ordinator has attended coordinators' meetings that are usually organised each term by the local authority. Information from these is shared with the staff at the school. Otherwise, there has been limited professional development for staff in science over the last few years.
- With re-organisation of responsibilities in school, science is at present coordinated through a collegiate approach which involves several staff. This is working effectively at present, but the school should continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangement.

Inclusion

Inclusion is very good.

- All pupils make very good progress. Though girls did better than boys in national tests at age 11 in 2006, this is not an established pattern in the school.
- Less able pupils, in particular, make very good progress when they tackle tasks in groups made up of pupils of all abilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- modifying assessment of the competences needed for national tests in science
- considering how best to meet the needs of different sections of the ability range, particularly in the lead up to national tests.

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

As I explained previously, 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

Jim Bennetts
Her Majesty's Inspector