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Miss S Shirras
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Shirras

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 December 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 yourself, the subject leader for science, and with pupils from Year 6, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in science is good. Standards are average.

- National test results at Year 6 have been well below the average for several years. However, pupils of all abilities are currently making good progress in lessons, and standards are generally at and around the levels expected of pupils of their age.
- Pupils enjoy science, especially when lessons are practical. Year 3 pupils are enthusiastic about science and Year 6 pupils have a good awareness of how important science is for their future economic well-being.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Teachers have responded very well to the challenge of changing their approach to teaching science, to include more enjoyment and practical work. The lessons seen were of good quality, with many good and better features that captured pupils' interest and provided enjoyment. Pupils worked well together on their practical tasks and were given many opportunities to contribute their ideas.
- Within this positive picture of effective teaching and learning, the recording of science activities in pupils' workbooks and teachers' marking for improvement are areas for development. Also, despite the advances in making lessons more practical, pupils have relatively little encouragement to plan, set up and develop lines of science enquiry for themselves, under the guidance of teachers.
- Assessment of pupils' progress in science is developing well from a low baseline. Teachers routinely assess the progress of each child in the development of their investigative skills and in their science vocabulary. This progress is reviewed each term with the subject leader for science to determine whether intervention is required.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the science curriculum is good.

- The science curriculum has been reviewed as the school has changed phase from being a middle school to being a junior school. The National Curriculum Programme of Study for pupils aged 7 to 11 are covered in full. However, the programme has been moved about to ensure science is relevant to the broader curriculum. For example, the general theme for Year 3 pupils is 'Ourselves'. Science lessons for these pupils therefore include those aspects of the programmes of study that relate to pupils' understanding of their bodies and how they work. The result of curriculum development is a programme for science that is tailored well to the needs of pupils.
- The school does not yet offer extra-curricular opportunities to learn more about science but these are under consideration. This includes the establishment of 'booster' classes, aimed particularly at the many pupils who have limited opportunities to continue their learning at home.

Leadership and management of science

The leadership and management of science are good.

- You have provided the inspiration for the recent radical changes to the teaching of science. You support the subject manager extremely well.
- The subject manager has made good progress in developing science within a short period of time. The curriculum has been reviewed, assessment improved, pupils' progress tracked and a start made to spreading effective practice. The teachers and teaching assistants are won over to the new approach. They are fully committed to making science more practical and more enjoyable.
- The subject manager has an accurate view of the current position of science within the school. The school and governors are aware of the

need to demonstrate improvement by significantly raised standards. The success to date indicates that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve achievement and standards in science.

Inclusion

Inclusion in science is good.

- The care, guidance and support for pupils within science lessons are good. Pupils of all abilities are brought into discussions. Groups are generally of mixed ability and pupils of different abilities work together well.
- The school's leadership and management analyse the performance and progress of pupils of all groups in science. The school is effective in providing additional support for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils often make very good progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards. This is a priority to demonstrate the improved achievement of pupils in science
- building the pupils' skills of investigation so that they can play a greater role in planning, setting up, undertaking and recording their investigations and enquiries
- improving the quality of pupils' work in science workbooks and teachers' marking of pupils' work.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector