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Ms Y Morris
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Morris

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 February to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on transition within and between phases (F-KS1-KS2); the range of learning experiences; the status and use of SC1.

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 you, the deputy headteacher, the science subject leader, a group of Year 6 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of parts of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards are below the national average. Achievement is satisfactory.

- The attainment of pupils entering the school is below the national average with a large proportion who are at the early stages of learning English. As determined by national tests.
- By the end of year 6 standards are slightly below the national average at level 4 and well below the national average at level 5.
- The progress pupils make in science is generally satisfactory but has declined from a high point in 2005 when it was good.

- The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there is a good range of activity in science, including investigative work, across all year groups but evidence of a range of writing styles is limited by the end of Year 6.
- There are clear efforts by the staff to concentrate on learning the investigative skills of science, but the recording sheets used offer the same level of challenge for all pupils in the key stage ineffective of attainment.
- Pupils' behaviour is generally good where they are fully engaged in lessons and they show good personal development.
- The school uses the building of their new school well to develop science knowledge which contributes to their future economic well-being.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teaching is mostly satisfactory with some examples of good teaching where teachers use effective questioning skills to challenge and extend pupils' thinking.
- Teachers do not always identify precisely what the pupils are going to learn in each lesson, and learning objectives are not specific enough.
- The introduction of a whole school planning sheet for recording investigations has raised the profile of this area of science, but it is not yet sufficiently differentiated to enable pupils to build up their investigative skills effectively year-on-year.
- Lessons provide a suitable range of learning opportunities, and support staff are well deployed to help those who need extra help.
- The use of formative assessment is in its infancy but a new scheme aimed at developing this is in the process of being rolled out to all classes.
- The use of interactive software to experience 'virtual experiments' and computers to research science topics is good.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum provided is good

- The school has devised a creative curriculum map which makes good links between all curriculum areas through a 'themed' approach.
- Science topics have a high profile within the curriculum and they cover all of the National Curriculum requirements.
- Good use is made of visits to the Science Museum and other local facilities for all pupils to develop their scientific knowledge.
- There is a planned programme of visitors to the school which enrich the science curriculum, and a range of extra-curricular clubs linked to science is on offer. The school has won awards for its recycling and horticultural initiatives.
- Good curriculum links are made with the local secondary school through a science transition initiative which involves an exchange of staff and pupils.

- Teaching of scientific enquiry (SC1) has been identified as an area of high priority in the school's development plan including continuing professional development for many staff.
- The school has increased its resource base to support the revised planning through, for example, acquiring good interactive software and the purchase of a good range of science based literature for every class.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

- There are clear and appropriate priorities in the school's development plan for bringing about the necessary improvements in achievement and standards.
- The subject leader has introduced procedures to track pupils' progress across the school, and has provided a strong emphasis on developing pupils' investigative skills in all year groups.
- A robust programme of lesson monitoring and scrutiny of work carried out by the subject leader is in place.
- Assessment for learning strategies are still at the early stages of development, and specific targets for improvement for individual and groups of pupils are not fully in place.
- Arrangements for transition of pupils between key stages within the school are secure, and the transition arrangements with the local secondary school through the transition initiative are good.

Inclusion

Inclusion in the school is good

- Performance data do not show significant differences in the progress made between pupils of different abilities.
- In lessons pupils who have a learning difficulty and/or disability and those who are at the early stages of learning English were receiving good support and making good progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the standards and progress pupils make in science
- revising the systems in place for pupils to record the outcomes of scientific enquiry so that they better meets the needs of all pupils and age groups
- developing more robust target setting procedures for individual and groups of pupils.

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

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector