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25 January 2008

Mrs C Geoghegan
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Dear Mrs Geoghegan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 January 2008 to look at work in science.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of science, the visit had a particular focus on transition within and between phases (F-KS1-KS2-KS3); 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in science are above average and achievement is good.

- Pupils make good progress in science throughout the school. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above the national average.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in their development of scientific enquiry skills.

- Science lessons promote children's enjoyment, knowledge of living a healthy lifestyle and the importance of safe practice very well.
- Pupils' personal development is supported well through the many opportunities they have to work in pairs and small groups.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and their attitudes to learning are excellent.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The overall quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about science. They plan lessons well with a good variety of sequenced activities.
- Much teaching is based around interesting activities which engage pupils and actively involves them in their learning.
- Teachers make effective use of paired discussion and targeted questioning to improve learning.
- Teachers make effective use of information communication technology. For example good use is made of interactive white boards, word processing packages and the internet for research. However, data loggers are not used in lessons.
- Most marking of pupils' work is helpful and informative. However, marking is rarely linked to the pupil's target for improvement.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly. The science co-ordinator has identified the need to ensure a greater consistency of judgements across year groups when evaluating pupils' work.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- Due to mixed age classes the science curriculum is delivered through a two year rolling programme, which ensures that all requirements of the National Curriculum are covered.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed in order to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils.
- The curriculum has a clear emphasis on developing pupils' sense of curiosity and interest in the world around them. Opportunities to develop pupils' skills of scientific enquiry are well integrated into schemes of work.
- Schemes of work are based around clear learning outcomes for pupils. They contain good advice on how to ensure activities meet the needs of all ability of pupils and identify opportunities to assess pupils' work.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The science co-ordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and areas in need of development in science.
- The science coordinator has maintained a clear focus on the importance of scientific enquiry within the science curriculum.
- Science courses throughout the school are coherently organised and resources are well managed.
- Challenging targets are set for pupils and their progress towards these targets is monitored well by teachers. This information is not currently centrally stored and analysed, although good plans are in place to address this issue.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is outstanding.

- The school provides pupils with a caring environment in which they are happy and enjoy learning science.
- Less able pupils make very good progress due to the very effective support they receive from teaching assistants.
- All other groups of pupils make similar, good progress throughout the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring there is greater consistency in judging levels of work across year groups
- introducing a central, electronic system for storing assessment data on pupils' attainment in science
- ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to use data logging equipment.

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

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector