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Mr D Suttle
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Suttle

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 March 2009 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 analysis of data, interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are broadly average.

- Data which take into account pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 1 and contextual factors show that during Key Stage 2 pupils consistently make above average progress.
- In 2007 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in science by the end of Key Stage 2 was in line with the national average, and the proportion achieving the higher Level 5 was above the national average. Unvalidated data for 2008 show slightly lower results. Given the pupils starting points this represents good progress.
- School data for pupils who completed their primary education in 2008 show that a high proportion of pupils made two levels of progress between the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2.
- Standards in the lessons observed were at least satisfactory and pupils' progress was good for the majority of pupils.

- The school's analysis of data shows no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- Behaviour observed in lessons was very good and often exemplary. In the outdoor lessons pupils worked very well on the tasks set, even when not directly supervised, and made good progress in developing their observational skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

Teaching and learning are good.

- All the lessons observed were good.
- Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. They are enthusiastic, encouraging and patient.
- Teachers' classroom management is very effective and this fosters the good attitudes to learning shown by pupils, who are motivated, attentive and keen to do well.
- Science lessons feature a variety of activities, including some good practical activities which pupils particularly enjoy. For example, Year 3 pupils set up circuits to test whether different materials conduct electricity.
- There is some good use of information and communications technology in science, including teachers' use of electronic whiteboards to show illustrations, notes and video clips. Pupils made good use of digital cameras in an outdoor lesson, recording images of animals and plants they found.
- Teachers make some effective use of question and answer to revise prior knowledge and reinforce learning.
- There are some good opportunities for collaborative work in lessons.
- In some lessons there is insufficient reinforcement of key scientific terms and vocabulary.
- Some differentiation was seen in lessons, especially in terms of support for less able pupils and those with specific needs, but on occasion work for more able pupils is not sufficiently challenging.
- There is very good inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including deaf and hearing impaired children, in science lessons. These pupils receive very effective support. For example, specialist teachers assist by signing where necessary.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to the lessons and support individuals and groups.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in science is good.

- Pupils are provided with a good range of learning experiences.
- The school offers very good cross-curricular enrichment activities which often include good opportunities to promote learning in science. A recent example is the school visit to Kew Gardens as part of the annual arts and writing festival.
- Science specific enrichment activities are also offered, for example through workshops delivered by staff from a local museum.

- Good use is made of resources available locally, including the school's own wildlife garden.
- In the Foundation Stage there are good opportunities for children to develop knowledge and understanding of the world.
- There are some opportunities for pupils to develop their scientific enquiry skills but there is scope for increasing this.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- Leaders and managers have a sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses in science. They recognise the need to give greater emphasis to the skills of scientific enquiry.
- A very thorough analysis of data is carried out and used to inform improvement planning.
- There are some very good science classroom displays.
- Day to day management of science is effective.
- Resources for teaching science are good.
- The science coordinator, in post since January 2009, is beginning to develop a stronger focus on aspects of science, for example through work towards Eco awards.
- There has been limited recent professional development in science for teachers, but there are plans to address this.
- There has been no recent monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in science through lesson observation, but teachers' planning and pupils' work are scrutinised and the information is beginning to be used to plan improvements.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- offering more opportunities for independent investigative work to develop the skills of scientific enquiry
- increasing the attention given in lessons to developing and reinforcing the use of scientific terminology
- further developing differentiation strategies in lessons to ensure that work is well matched to all pupils' needs, especially for more able 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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector