

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

1 February 2010

Ms C Loxton
Executive Principal
Harris Academy Peckham
112 Peckham Road
London
SE15 5DZ

Dear Ms Loxton

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during our visit on 19 and 20 January 2010 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 evaluating the impact of recent initiatives and investigating the need for future developments.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Overall, students make satisfactory progress in science. They enter the school with extremely low attainment and make steady progress to reach standards that are below average.
- GCSE results in 2009 were well below national averages, with almost a quarter of students gaining two or more A* to C grades in science. This was an improvement on outcomes in the previous year. Attainment was particularly low in the core and additional applied science GCSEs but significantly improved in the additional science course.
- The department is working hard to reach the challenging performance targets that have been set for GCSE outcomes in 2010. On current

performance data, the school predicts that attainment will improve in 2010. The school has recently introduced a BTEC science course for almost half of the students that is more suited to their abilities and interests.

- In many lessons, students were often passive and slow to become actively involved in their learning. Most teachers observed worked hard to engage students with their learning but were not always successful. However, most students keep up with the demands of their science coursework through the persistent support of their teachers.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory.

- In the lessons observed, teaching was broadly satisfactory with some that was good. In the best lessons, teachers worked hard to stimulate students' interest in science and expected them to be active participants in their learning. Good focused questions were used well to challenge students' understanding and enabled the teacher to check their progress.
- Lessons were planned well to meet students' needs through a variety of activities, especially practical ones, which students really enjoyed. However, the role of investigative science and scientific enquiry is underdeveloped.
- In the less successful lessons, students did not engage well with their learning. Teachers had low expectations and allowed students to be too passive and uninvolved in their lessons.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used successfully for a range of purposes. For example, in one lesson students were well used to registering their own attendance on the teacher's computer as they entered the laboratory and then settled immediately to the lesson starter activity displayed using ICT, with no time being wasted.
- Students' punctuality to lessons is a major issue for the school and late arrivals often disrupt lessons, particularly at the start of the day.
- Marking and assessment of students' work are largely informative and give advice on presentational issues, as well as guidance on how to improve standards.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The science curriculum is going through significant reform as this is seen as a key development for ensuring that provision meets students' needs.
- The recent introduction of BTEC science into both Year 10 and 11 in September 2009 has been managed well. The department is determined to maintain diversity of provision to meet students' needs by continuing to offer a range of other GCSE courses alongside the BTEC and is also planning to introduce a triple science course.
- Different pathways for sixth-form students are under careful consideration. A BTEC national qualification at level 3 is being introduced to ensure

continuity with BTEC courses in Key Stage 4 and to enhance availability of post-16 science courses.

- Enrichment activities, especially for more able students, are well attended and supported by links with universities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in science is good.

- Science is managed well in the context of a school where there is strong support from the senior leadership team. This is helping the department to deal with some difficult staffing and recruitment issues.
- The curriculum leader is relatively new in post and is working hard to support the science team and improve the quality of science teaching.
- Good systems are in place to monitor students' performance, track progress and identify underachievement. These support the thorough evaluation and monitoring of teaching and enable the department to set priorities for further development.
- Teachers feel well supported by the in-house training and coaching that are aimed at the development of their professional skills.
- Lesson planning is good and guided by a well-sequenced and detailed scheme of work. This allows teachers who are more confident to adapt the material to the learning needs of their students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of science teaching by sharing existing good practice more widely within the department
- encouraging students' scientific thinking and independent learning through strengthening the role of investigative science in practical activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector