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Mrs L Bragg  
Headteacher  
Rose Hill Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Bragg

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 26 January 2010 to look at work in science.

As outlined in the 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 to investigate 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six lessons on both of the school's sites.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Standards in science, as measured by the national, end of key stage tests and assessments, are about average at the end of Years 2 and 6. This has been the broad outcome for the past three years and suggests pupils make satisfactory progress in science.
- With the admission of many pupils in September 2009, following the closure of two nearby primary schools, there are now approximately 40% more pupils in the school. Comparisons with past performance in science are, therefore, unreliable.

- Learning in lessons seen was of consistently good quality. In all lessons, pupils were actively engaged in practical activities and investigations that caught their interest and enthusiasm. Many pupils had undertaken extra research at home, building well on their learning in school. Pupils were developing insights and understanding about several physical processes from their investigations, such as floating and sinking and change of state from solid to liquid.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in their development of knowledge and understanding of the world and develop an effective foundation for later learning in science. Through exploration, mainly using talk but also other means, such as art and drawing, they refine their ideas of the natural world and physical processes.
- Pupils' attitudes to science are positive, including those of pupils who find learning difficult and those who are especially able in science. Pupils have a strong sense of environmental awareness. Without exception, the pupils interviewed enjoyed learning science through investigations. However, with the exception of those who were particularly interested in science and who chose it as their favourite subject, pupils said they were much less interested in science lessons where teachers talked a lot and when learning was passive.

#### Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- There are very few teachers in the school whose main subject is science. Therefore, the vast majority of science is taught by non-specialists. In all lessons seen, teachers' subject knowledge was at least adequate.
- Making science lessons practical for pupils, combined with high levels of generic teaching skills, ensured good quality teaching in all the lessons seen. Lessons had pace and teachers used a variety of strategies to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. Work was planned well to challenge pupils of different abilities, and support in classes was deployed effectively to help those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and science work in pupils' books was uniformly well-presented.
- Assessment in science is of satisfactory quality. Assessment is a current focus for the school as it audits the practice of staff from the three schools and undertakes local authority training on assessment. The involvement of pupils in assessing their learning in science and the quality of marking for improvement are areas under development. Teachers make exceptional use of photographic evidence to record achievement in science where pupils are not using more formal methods of recording..

#### Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- The curriculum in science meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. It is under review at present in response to the national

initiative from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency to develop the primary school curriculum. The school is developing a science curriculum that is better linked to other subjects and the themes for learning agreed for each half term.

- Although larger blocks of time are being allowed for science investigations within the timetable, the time provided is as yet insufficient to promote pupils' full involvement in the design and setting up of experiments.
- The curriculum provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 is well organised to take advantage of the spontaneous interests of young children. During the visit, there was much evidence of the exploration of the properties of ice following the recent unusually cold weather.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- Science has a new subject coordinator who has made a good start to the leadership and management of the subject through professional development and analysis of performance.
- Senior staff provide good oversight for science. The coordinator is well supported by you and your deputy headteacher who have a good understanding of the present strengths and weaknesses in science; for example, the relative weakness of pupils' understanding of the more abstract physical processes such as 'forces'. Pupils' progress in science is well monitored and tracked against individual targets.
- The staff are receiving professional development in science in the aspect of the assessment of pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- exploring ways to promote pupils' greater involvement in the design and setting up of investigations
- making more use of the opportunities in the local community for science investigations to make the science curriculum more relevant for 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

Brian Padgett  
Her Majesty's Inspector