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Miss A Dawson
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Dawson

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation and that of staff and pupils, during my visit on 19 September 2011 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with you and the teacher responsible for science; scrutiny of relevant documentation and pupils' work; discussions with pupils in Year 6; and observations of four science lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Pupils make good progress in each key stage to attain broadly average standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage also make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, often from very low starting points, to achieve levels of knowledge and understanding typical of children of their age.
- Many pupils face ongoing barriers to learning, including the learning of science. A lack of understanding of the English language is the foremost of these, as English is often a second language for many. A significant proportion of children attend the school newly-arrived in England, unable to speak English. The school provides effective support for these groups,

enabling pupils to make good and sometimes exceptional progress in science.

- Pupils enjoy science. They particularly enjoy undertaking investigations. They cooperate well with each other when undertaking experiments. Older girls from minority ethnic backgrounds particularly impress with their enthusiasm and motivation in science and with their mature attitudes.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Teaching observed was never less than good and some was of outstanding quality. Teachers have put considerable thought into planning lessons that interest and engage pupils. Science is made real, not second hand. This was well illustrated in a lesson on the function of the lungs with Year 6 pupils, where a sheep's lung was examined, and in a Year 2 lesson on human development, where pupils observed the behaviours of a real six-week-old baby boy.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work in close-knit, effective teams. Assistants are fully involved in teaching and learning, whether supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or in leading aspects of investigations with groups of pupils.
- The teaching of science has not been a priority for the school and little professional development in science has taken place recently. However, the teaching of science continues to develop. Lessons are increasingly focused on pupils acquiring the skills of investigative science and on recording pupils' findings and progress in more varied ways.
- Teachers assess pupils' work effectively, with marking that points out what has been achieved and what might be done better.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- Breadth and balance within science is ensured as pupils' work is based on the National Curriculum for science.
- The curriculum is being developed so that subjects may be taught within themes. Science is often central to these themes and pupils make frequent visits to venues of scientific interest in the early stages of each theme, thus enhancing pupils' interest. Links between other subjects and science within the themes are effective, so that science lessons contribute to learning in other subjects, such as English and design and technology, making the science curriculum more relevant.
- Much effort has been expended by staff to develop a more creative curriculum to interest and engage pupils. These efforts are proving very successful; teachers are imaginative in their planning of lessons and pupils find them memorable.

- The outdoor facilities have been developed well to promote learning in science. Opportunities to learn about science are built into the outdoor area of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the school grounds have wild areas, a pond and raised beds for growing vegetables. The school runs clubs that are science related, such as a gardening club and there is an active Eco Team that has achieved several awards.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

The effectiveness of leadership and management in science is good.

- You provide strong leadership on principles and values for the school and for pupils' learning within which the policy and practice for science has been developed.
- The subject leader is a science graduate, ensuring that the leadership of science is well informed and securely grounded. She provides effective, informal support for staff.
- The school tracks pupils' progress adequately and leaders have a clear view of progress and overall attainment in science.
- Science is not a school priority for improvement and yet evidence from the visit suggests that the subject is being continually reviewed and developed. This is because there is a culture of self-evaluation within the school that includes science. Despite a lack of external opportunities for professional development, staff expertise in science is improving.
- Leaders ensure that procedures for pupils' health and safety are rigorous. However, a strength of the work of the school in science is that pupils are taught to manage risk. This enables them to gain first-hand experiences safely.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed included:

- No significant areas for improvement were identified. The visit confirmed the effectiveness of the direction in which the school is developing science.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop science in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector