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Mrs S Levy
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Levy

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 November 2009 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 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 the school leadership team, staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Performance data from the last academic year show standards to be below national average. However, the standards seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of pupils' work were better than this.
- Over the last three years the outcomes in science have improved against the national average. While attainment was significantly below average in 2007, this was not the case in 2008 or 2009.

- Pupils are aware of how their work has improved and they show positive attitudes towards learning. They are working with confidence and show interest in the work.
- These positive attitudes towards science are promoted by the good teaching and the inclusion of investigatory activities. In these activities, pupils are taking decisions and working collaboratively.

Quality of teaching of science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Most lessons seen were good or better.
- Teachers use question and answer techniques well to check the progress being made by pupils and to engage them in the work.
- There is a good range of learning activity that is sustained by the 'coloured learning' approach in which groups take it in turns to engage in different styles of learning from teacher-led to independent learning of pupils' choice.
- Teachers communicate well giving clear instructions, unambiguous explanations and listening carefully to pupils' ideas.
- Since the previous inspection, the clear focus on teaching and learning has helped to bring consistency to teaching and to raising standards.
- Information and communication technology is used well to promote effective learning and is deployed in a range of ways including data-handling and independent learning by pupils.
- Currently, the assessment of pupils' attainment is not carried out systematically across the age range. Pupils are not involved in self- or peer-assessment which would help them understand how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The curriculum for science is good.

- The scheme of work provides a balanced and broad experience of the science described in the National Curriculum.
- Investigative science is represented well in the plan for learning and the range of activities is designed well to give pupils of all abilities good access to science experiences.
- The school has a two-year rolling plan for science that was put into place by the senior leadership team. There are clear and relevant links to other subjects.
- Teachers are encouraged to have high expectations of pupils and pupils work to the principle of 'aim high'.

- Enrichment and extra-curricular activities are good. It is clear that science goes beyond the classroom and there are well-attended extra-curricular activities such as the gardening club.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management of science are good.

- The senior leadership team has created a good climate for improvement and has set out a well-constructed scheme of work that ensures a full range of experiences and modes of learning for the pupils.
- The school has had a focus on improving teaching and learning since the previous inspection and this is having a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils.
- There is a systematic approach to setting targets that are appropriately demanding for pupils. Currently, the assessment of pupils' performance in science is not carried out systematically.
- Teachers feel well led and supported in their work. They feel able to be creative in their approach to teaching as they are guided by the scheme of work.
- The subject leader in science is a member of the senior leadership team and this is helpful in ensuring the ethos of raising standards goes beyond that of English and mathematics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing self- and peer-assessment in science
- assessing pupils' progress in science more frequently and in a systematic way.

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

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector