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1 March 2011

Mr P Jakszka
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Dear Mr Jakszka

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 26 and 27 January 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 staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is satisfactory.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 has fluctuated over the last three years but overall, is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE is below average.
- Students make satisfactory progress between Years 7 and 11. However, their progress is slower during Key Stage 3 than it is during Key Stage 4.
- Post-16 students completing A-level courses also make satisfactory progress although retention rates from Year 12 into Year 13 are low.
- Most students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and are keen to be active participants in lessons. They enjoy opportunities to discuss their

ideas and understanding with their peers and show a willingness to do their best work.

- In several lessons seen, students' progress was limited by the quality of teaching despite their good levels of engagement.
- The majority of students are aware of their current level of working and could give details of what they needed to do to improve. This degree of understanding was found to be more consistent at Key Stages 4 and 5.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory.

- Teachers plan in detail and incorporate learning objectives designed to meet the different needs of students in the class.
- Teachers typically include a range of activities to support the intended learning and this variety helps to promote students' engagement in science.
- The quality of teaching was satisfactory in the large majority of lessons seen and this is reflected in students' satisfactory progress over time.
- Although teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge in the lessons observed, this knowledge was not used well consistently to place the learning in a relevant context for all students, particularly those following applied courses at Key Stages 4 and 5.
- New approaches to assessing students' development of scientific enquiry skills have been put into place at Key Stage 3, but it is too early to see the impact of these initiatives.
- Teachers' confidence in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning varies across the department. Students report that opportunities to develop their ICT skills in a scientific context are limited.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is satisfactory.

- At Key Stage 3 the curriculum provides a balanced approach to developing students' knowledge and understanding of science. It is less effective in promoting good progression in the development of their scientific enquiry skills.
- The recent inclusion of applied science qualifications at Key Stages 4 and 5 is ensuring provision at these key stages is better matched to students' different learning needs. However, it is too soon to see the impact of curriculum developments on improving student outcomes.
- Students appreciate the additional support they receive, including revision classes, course work days and mentoring, which makes an effective contribution to their progress.

- Curriculum enrichment, for example, links with science-related industries or the use of visits and visitors, is currently limited.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

Leadership and management in science are satisfactory.

- There is a strong commitment within the department to developing provision and teachers are keen to incorporate new ideas and approaches into their lessons.
- The department has managed a number of staffing issues successfully during the last year with good support from the senior leadership team.
- Students' progress is carefully monitored at Key Stages 4 and 5 with an appropriate range of strategies used to help underachieving students get back on track. These systems and support mechanisms are currently less well developed at Key Stage 3.
- Over the last two years, the monitoring of provision, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4 has been largely informal. This has limited the sharpness with which weaker elements of teaching have been identified.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the effectiveness with which provision and student outcomes are monitored and evaluated
- taking swift action to increase the proportion of good or better teaching at all key stages
- developing the curriculum and the use of challenging targets to promote students' enjoyment and accelerate their achievement at Key Stage 3.

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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector