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Mr M Cooney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cooney

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 6 October 2010 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is satisfactory.

- Standards and achievement have changed over the last four years.
- In 2009, three years of improving outcomes led to a measure of progress by the end of Key Stage 2 that was significantly above the national average.
- In 2010, there was a fall in performance with the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or more falling more than the proportion at Level 4 or above.
- Changes in outcomes for pupils are a combination of variations in the attainment of pupils on entry to the school and turbulence in the staffing of the school.
- During the same two years, 2009 and 2010, the standards seen at the end of Key Stage 1 rose from being well below average to around the national

average which is the reverse of the changes seen at the end of Key Stage 2.

- There are no significant differences between the progress made by pupils from different groups. This indicates good inclusion of pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils are working with confidence. They are clearly used to making decisions, joining in planning and raising their known questions. They show positive attitudes to work in science.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- All the teaching seen was at least good with some elements that were outstanding.
- Teachers plan very effectively for activities that are well matched to learning objectives and are set in relevant contexts that engage pupils well.
- Individual pupils are challenged appropriately. Teachers use question and answer techniques to check on the learning and to engage pupils.
- Teachers are using some assessments that inform them of pupils' progress but work is needed to bring about greater consistency in assessment practice.
- The school is developing the range of assessments, specific to science, linked to targets and monitoring. This is planned to involve more self-assessment by pupils.
- Teachers use ICT well to extend pupils' experience of the world which they cannot experience first-hand. They use interactive whiteboards well to engage pupils and check their understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- There is a good detailed scheme of work throughout the school. This has been recently reviewed to ensure the coverage of the National Curriculum in science for the mixed-age classes.
- The scheme of work is the product of good management and leadership working in collaboration with teaching staff. Individual class teachers engage with other teachers to discuss plans.
- Planning involves cross-curricular work including the effective development of literacy through science activities.
- The curriculum is well balanced and covers all areas of science including scientific enquiry. Pupils clearly enjoy the practical work they engage in.
- Scientific enquiry is a significant element of all the work in science, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage and provides a good basis for the range of science education that the school provides.

- There are good enrichment activities that not only bring people concerned with science into the school but include visit out of school to sites of scientific interest.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- You and the senior leadership team have brought about a common understanding of science and how it is best taught and learnt. The direction of development is well understood and shared by staff.
- Science-specific targets are being developed to guide the efforts of staff and pupils. Monitoring of outcomes by assessment and the scrutiny of work has been undertaken.
- Direct monitoring of teaching through observation in science has yet to be implemented. Similarly, the tracking of progress in science is being developed in line with those for English and mathematics.
- The school has not provided science-specific continuing professional development to teachers but has plans to look to external sources, such as the local authority and other agencies, particularly to support the science coordinator.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the achievement of pupils in science through greater consistency in provision and the consolidation of improvements in teaching
- introducing the evaluation of teaching by observation of science lessons
- further developing the target-setting, assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in 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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector