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Mrs A Farrell
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Dear Mrs Farrell

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: science

Thank you for facilitating my visit on 26 September 2012 to look at work in science. In particular, please pass on my thanks to Mrs Roberts, deputy headteacher, who managed the visit and to your staff and pupils for their hospitality and cooperation.

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 three science lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is good.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is good.

- Pupils' attainment in science, measured at the end of each key stage, is above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 2, almost all pupils achieve the expected level in science and an above average proportion of pupils exceed this. School records indicate that pupils in all years make good progress and meet challenging targets.
- In a Year 6 lesson, pupils made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of adaptation in animals. Year 2 pupils learned about reversible and irreversible changes in foods when heated. In the Reception Class, children extended their knowledge and understanding of the senses of sight, smell and taste. In all lessons, pupils acquired the language of science effectively.

- Pupils show a great enthusiasm for science and high levels of engagement in lessons, especially in their practical work. By Year 6, many pupils are sufficiently keen about their science work to follow-up lessons with research of their own at home. Behaviour is excellent and co-operative working contributes effectively to pupils' personal and social development.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is good.

- Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives which set out what pupils are to learn. Up to half of each lesson is practical in nature. Lessons are lively and active. Activities challenge groups of pupils at different stages of development, and teaching assistants play an important role in teaching these groups during the practical sessions. Pupils discuss their findings and feedback how well they have achieved the lesson's objectives.
- Pupils are encouraged to use a range of ways to record their science; for example, in labelled drawings and through photographs. However, a scrutiny of pupils' writing indicated that, because recording was often on prepared worksheets, there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to write in their own words, at length, about science. This limits the effectiveness of the promotion pupils' literacy skills through science.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, very good use is made of incidental opportunities to promote knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, in a discussion about the best materials to keep a baby warm and dry, the teacher drew the classes' attention to a child who had come to school that morning in two coats. One was an inner for warmth and the other an outer, waterproof layer, neatly illustrating her teaching point.
- Although of good quality, teaching is not yet outstanding. Too many questions and observations raised by pupils in science lessons are answered and explained by teachers, reducing the need for pupils to think and hypothesise for themselves.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- The science curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum for science. The subject is taught mainly as a central part of topics to ensure its relevance for pupils. Science has a high priority in the school. A minimum of two hours each week are devoted to science.
- There is a clear priority given to practical work in science. In their planning, teachers are required to say which skills of investigative science they are promoting.
- Links between science and other subjects are strong. Artwork is often used as a medium for recording science. Also, geography is studied alongside science, exemplified exceptionally well by the outcomes of a visit

to a limestone cavern in the Peak District. This also illustrates how the science curriculum is enriched by visits out of school.

- The school's policy to involve parents as partners in learning includes science. Observations of the changing phases of the moon, recorded over weeks at home in 'Moon Diaries' by Year 6 pupils, provide an excellent example of such partnership working.

Effectiveness of leadership in, and management of, science

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

- Leaders and managers have a clear sense of direction for the development of science. Senior staff know how science contributes to over-arching aims for pupils to develop resilience in their response to challenges. The subject is well-managed, providing good guidance for teachers.
- Assessment is very rigorous. Pupils' progress in science is tracked from term to term with thoroughness and with high expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- The school makes good use of subject expertise available in the science department of its associated secondary school.
- Leaders are aware of shortfalls in the provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage with its inevitable impact on opportunities for children to fully develop their knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to write more freely and at length about science, to develop their literacy skills
- developing teachers' skills of questioning in science to facilitate the development of scientific thought, such as in developing hypotheses and where and how evidence might best be sought
- improving the opportunities for learning outdoors.

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

As 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