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Mrs L Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Evans

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 27 and 28 September 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science is outstanding.

Achievement in science

Achievement in science is outstanding.

- The percentage of students attaining two or more A* to C grades in science subjects is significantly above the national average. This involves above average A* to C pass rates in core and additional science as well as biology, chemistry and physics.
- Value added data and lesson observations indicate that students make outstanding progress in science between Years 7 and 11. All groups of students make similar progress.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent and they respond very positively to the opportunities they are given to work either independently or in groups.

- Students' raise questions, design and carry out investigations and reach conclusions very effectively. By the end of Year 11, students' skills of scientific enquiry are well above those seen nationally.
- Students enjoy science and a high percentage chooses to follow post-16 science courses.

Quality of teaching in science

The quality of teaching in science is outstanding.

- Lessons are very well structured and planned around clear learning outcome for students.
- Teachers are energetic and enthusiastic and they plan and deliver lessons that contain a broad range of activities that engage students in their learning actively. This is having a positive impact on students' interest in and enjoyment of science.
- Teachers assess students' progress very well and ensure that activities are matched well to their ability.
- Effective use is made of questioning not only to check students' scientific knowledge but also to explore and develop their understanding.
- Students' know their targets and are very clear about what they need to do to improve as a result of regular and extremely helpful marking of their work.
- Students talk very positively about the help and support they receive from teachers. Year 11 students, especially, appreciate the additional revision classes that are available to them.
- Science technicians are used very well by teaching staff to support students' learning in the classroom.

Quality of the curriculum in science

The quality of the curriculum in science is good.

- Schemes of work have been developed by the department so that science content is delivered through contexts that are relevant and interesting to students.
- The development of students' skills of scientific enquiry is firmly embedded in the curriculum. Students have a number of opportunities to practise these skills through designing and carrying out whole investigations.
- Information and communication technology is used very effectively by students to improve their learning in science.
- A broad range of curriculum initiatives and extra-curricular activities effectively promote students' enjoyment and learning of science and help them appreciate its importance to their future careers.
- During Years 10 and 11, students follow either a triple award science course or core and additional science. The department is currently reviewing the curriculum with a view to offering a vocational course in

2011, as they recognise this may better meet the learning needs of some students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in science

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

- Leaders and managers of the school and science department have very high expectations and want the very best for all students.
- The head of science has created a common sense of purpose in the department in which all staff work very well together. Staff roles and responsibilities are linked well to their individual areas of strength.
- The department is organised and managed extremely well and runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
- Very good systems to monitor and evaluate provision and students' outcomes are in place and effective action is taken to drive improvement. For example, the progress of students in physics and the percentage of students attaining the higher A* to A grades in science subjects has been effectively improved over the past couple of years.
- An excellent system to track the progress of students towards challenging targets has been established. This system enables underachieving students to be identified quickly. A range of effective intervention strategies are in place to support these students.
- Science staff are provided with, and involved in a broad range of professional development activities that are having a positive impact on their teaching and leadership and management practice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- completing the review of the science courses on offer in Years 10 and 11 to ensure they meet the learning needs of all students better.

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

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector