

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



18 October 2007

Mr Carter
Headteacher
Poole Grammar School
Gravel Hill
Poole
Dorset
BH17 9JU

Dear Mr Carter

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Science

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16-17 October 2007 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards in science are well above average and achievement is satisfactory.

- Standards in science at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are well above the national average. However, the percentage of pupils achieving A* and A grades in GCSE examinations is below expected given the pupils attainment on entry to the school.
- The department has targeted achievement at the higher grades during the past two years and the percentage of pupils achieving A* and A grades in GCSE examinations is improving.
- The overall progress made by pupils between Years 8 and 11 is satisfactory.
- Standards in A level sciences are above the national average. The progress of students in these courses is good. This is particularly true of more able students who achieve well.

- Pupils are motivated, behave well and have a well developed sense of curiosity. Pupils want to learn and work hard in lessons. They work together well in groups when carrying out practical activities.

Quality of teaching and learning of science

The overall quality of teaching and learning in science is good.

- There is a very good balance of science specialists within the department. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Teachers plan lessons well around clear learning outcomes for pupils.
- Most lessons contain a range of activities that engage, interest and challenge pupils.
- Teachers make effective use of questioning to check and develop pupils learning.
- Good use is made of information communication technology (ICT) including the use of data loggers to promote learning.
- In Years 8 to 11 some teaching is too teacher directed. The result is that pupils have too little opportunity to develop their independent learning skills. Sixth form lessons provide students with greater opportunities to work independently.
- Pupils are aware of their academic targets. Marking gives good advice to pupils about how to improve the standard of their work and achieve their targets.
- Some teachers provide pupils with effective opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers. This good practice is not yet consistent across the department.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The department has taken the opportunity provided by the new GCSE science courses to review and develop the science curriculum.
- Pupils now start GCSE courses in all three sciences in Year 9. This allows them a greater amount of time to cover the subject requirements.
- In the past, all pupils completed GCSE courses in the three separate sciences (Triple award science). The school now offers pupils the choice between completing a course in double award science or triple award science in Year 11. This better matches the curriculum to pupils' needs.
- The number of teaching groups in Year 11 has also been doubled giving pupils greater teacher contact time.
- The department sensibly intends to further review and improve the science curriculum. The areas to be considered are allowing pupils an earlier choice between double or triple award science and opportunities to accelerate the curriculum for some pupils.

Leadership and management of science

Leadership and management in science are good.

- The sciences are well led and managed by heads of biology, chemistry and physics. These heads of department communicate well with each other and work effectively as a team.
- The needs and interests of pupils were considered well when a new GCSE science course was introduced in 2006.
- The development plans for all three sciences have a clear focus on increasing the percentage of A* and A grades achieved. The actions being taken are beginning to have a positive impact.
- Good arrangements for performance management are in place. This process supports the professional development of teachers well.
- Lesson observations are routinely carried out by members of the senior leadership team and heads of department. However, some of these observations focus too much on teaching rather than on pupils' learning.
- Pupils are set challenging targets. Progress towards these targets is regularly monitored. A good central system is used to track the progress of pupils in all three sciences towards their targets.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is good.

- The school has a positive and harmonious ethos. All pupils get on well with each other and there are very good relationships with teachers.
- The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as all other pupils in the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to review and develop the science curriculum so that it better matches the needs and abilities of pupils
- ensuring that lessons in Years 8 to 11 provide pupils with more opportunities to develop their independent learning skills.

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

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector