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Mr M Owen
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Dear Mr Owen

LAB 13 activities: note of visit

Thank you for your time, and that of your staff, governor and pupils when I visited your school on 21 April 2015. I observed the early morning meeting of the Lab 13 committee, then an activity where some pupils worked on processing data as part of a 'double blind' survey into the benefits of manuka honey.

I was impressed by the enthusiasm and initiative shown by the pupils as they took part in science activities. The LAB 13 model does allow pupils to take a high degree of ownership of their science learning, with a clear structure that ensures all school pupils have an opportunity to contribute to planning activities over the year. The scientist in residence ensures safe practice and operation of the specialised laboratory, and the approach does give pupils genuine experience of doing systematic scientific enquiry.

The key strength, however, is evident in the high level of technical and academic science experimental work, and the positive impact this is having on pupils' communication and numeracy skills. Pupils were analysing experimental data confidently, discussing articulately how the manuka honey study might be improved further, and also showing a surprisingly deep knowledge of the structure and properties of matter as they explained a 'dissolving sugar' experiment. It is this depth of knowledge, skill and understanding that marks out the impact of this science curriculum approach. And is the way that the LAB 13 operating model develops pupils' skills of communication, collaboration, debate, leadership and resilience that will have long-term benefits for these pupils beyond their learning of science.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector
National Lead, Science