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Ms K Simpson  
Headteacher  
Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children  
105 Camley Street  
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Dear Ms Simpson

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: geography**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 18 and 19 January 2011 to look at work in geography.

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: discussions with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in geography**

Achievement in geography is satisfactory.

- In this very small school, many pupils arrive with delayed language and a more limited knowledge and understanding of the world as a result of having experienced fewer opportunities for incidental learning compared to their hearing counterparts.
- Standards in geography vary widely from pupil to pupil reflecting the very wide range of ability as well as the complex range of special needs of an increasing proportion of the pupils.
- When work is well planned and focused, pupils can make good progress as evidenced by their work on recycling and improving their local environment. However, currently, the fragmented nature of the curriculum does not allow consistent progress to be made.

- Older pupils have basic core knowledge and can locate places and geographical features with a degree of accuracy. They are also able to use some relevant geographical vocabulary appropriately.
- Fieldwork skills are less well developed and pupils are less familiar with a wide range of maps. They lack greater depth of understanding about a range of places or geographical processes.
- Pupils are inquisitive and interested in what is going on around them. They are well behaved in lessons, supportive of each other and enjoy working collaboratively.

### **Quality of teaching of geography**

The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory overall.

- Teachers have very good generic teaching skills. All lessons observed were at least good with some outstanding aspects. However, day-to-day outcomes for pupils do not reflect this as a result of the fragmented curriculum they experience.
- Teachers are extremely confident and effective users of British Sign Language and generally teach exclusively through this medium. This engages pupils effectively and supports their involvement in lessons well.
- Teachers' ability to teach geographically is less evident as the subject has not been seen as a priority in the past and teachers have not had any professional training to develop their subject knowledge and geographical expertise.
- Geography often provides a context for learning in other areas. Teachers are not always aware of the most suitable resources or teaching approaches to use to promote effective learning.
- The use of new technology to engage pupils' interest is satisfactory. They respond particularly well to colourful images of the world around them and older pupils are competent users of the internet for research.
- Assessment is not thorough and is focused on end-of-year broad evaluations. However, these are not based on sound procedures. The fragmented curriculum does not support informed decisions about how pupils are progressing in their learning.

### **Quality of the curriculum in geography**

The quality of the curriculum in geography is broadly satisfactory.

- The school has identified that the current scheme of work is dated and no longer meets pupils' needs sufficiently well. Increasing numbers of pupils are entering the school with increasingly complex needs.
- The current curriculum units of work are not planned to build progressively pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, their experiences are very fragmented.

- Pupils enjoy the frequent visits to places around London but these are not used well to enhance learning. Better use is made in the Early Years Foundation Stage to raise pupils' awareness of the world around them. Currently, fieldwork skills are not being developed in a systematic way.
- Teachers' interpretation of the curriculum rarely allows pupils to develop knowledge and understanding about other localities in sufficient depth.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is satisfactory.

- The need to evaluate the subject more rigorously and ensure that coverage, consistency and progression are built into the new curriculum is acknowledged as a priority.
- The school is currently reviewing its subject coordination structure and has identified that collective responsibility has been relatively ineffective in supporting learning in geography.
- The school acknowledges the weaknesses in the curriculum and in some of the teachers' subject knowledge. Monitoring of the subject has also not been sufficiently thorough to improve less effective practice.
- Deployment of support staff is effective in assisting learning in the classroom.
- Teachers make good use of limited quality geographical resources. The resources and support offered by the subject associations have not been used and the school acknowledges that this is essential.
- Staff professional development needs have not been seen as a priority. No use has been made of links or the training provided by the subject associations to improve provision.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- developing the curriculum to ensure that it is well balanced, relevant and meets pupils' needs better
- ensuring that pupils progressively develop their knowledge and understanding as they move through the school
- making more effective use of the varied outdoor urban environment in the vicinity of the school to enhance learning
- developing teachers' subject knowledge and expertise by making use of the support, guidance and training provided by the subject associations.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop geography 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

**Leszek Iwaskow**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**