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Mrs Karen Graham
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Graham

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 24 November 2010 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: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons, one in each key stage.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- By the end of Key Stage 2 all pupils, regardless of their starting points, make good progress to attain standards in line with or above national expectations in geography.
- Pupils acquire a wide range of knowledge and understanding about geography. Geographical activities help pupils to understand the similarities and differences between places. They have well-developed locational knowledge and make appropriate use of a wide range of geographical vocabulary.
- The school has an accurate view of geographical attainment in terms of pupils' knowledge and understanding and has correctly identified that pupil attainment is not as high as it could be in terms of mapwork and fieldwork

skills. This limits the higher achieving pupils in reaching the highest levels in geography.

- Pupils are polite, respectful and well behaved and say that they enjoy learning about geography. They particularly value the meaningful learning experiences gained by the extensive use of visits within the local environment.

Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers and teaching assistants understand what constitutes good learning in geography. They motivate and engage pupils in interesting geography lessons, offering appropriate levels of challenge for pupils of different abilities. As a result, pupils make good progress in their geographical learning.
- High-quality questioning involves all pupils and opportunities are provided for pupils to think, solve problems, look at real issues and confidently share their views and opinions.
- Geography lessons are planned and sequenced well. Pupils have the opportunity to work collaboratively, ask and research their own questions and present their findings to others. This equips them well to undertake their own geographical enquiries.
- Teachers carefully evaluate learning and use assessment opportunities to inform teaching and support pupils' progress. They annotate and adjust their planning well to meet individual and group needs.
- The school has an appropriate range of geographical resources and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher shared a map of a Kenyan village using a visualiser and the interactive whiteboard. Pupils then used programmable toys to plan and make journeys around a large floor map of a Kenyan village.
- Geographical work is marked regularly and pupils indicate that teacher feedback helps them to improve their work.
- The school keeps useful samples of moderated work at different National Curriculum levels in geography, which support assessment well.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- A major curriculum review, undertaken in the last academic year, accurately identified a lack of progress in the development of pupils' geographical skills and knowledge and understanding of physical geography topics.

- Curriculum planning has been adapted to ensure better curriculum coverage of physical geography alongside the progressive development of geographical skills within each geographically focused topic. Gaps in pupils' skills at Key Stage 2 have also been addressed.
- The curriculum provides a relevant context for learning and is well matched to the needs of pupils in this school community. It makes good use of the local environment and links with schools in different locations in the region and abroad to foster pupils' enthusiasm for learning about and caring for different people and places.
- Appropriate links are made with other curriculum areas and good use is made of geography to develop pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. For example, Year 6 pupils are producing information leaflets on the nearby River Yarrow for the local council incorporating these skills.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to their own environment through the work of the school's Eco club.
- Good-quality displays around the school celebrate the good geography curriculum and pupils' growing knowledge and understanding of the world.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- As headteacher, you act as subject leader for geography within the recently formed humanities leadership team, ensuring that the subject has a prominent place in the school's curriculum.
- The school actively promotes the links between teaching, learning and the curriculum and community cohesion on a variety of scales.
- A detailed geography policy is in place. From the accurate monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken by you and the humanities leadership team you have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the subject.
- Good use is made of individual expertise and a number of local partnerships, for example with the local heritage centre, to develop geographical work further. The support and resources available from subject associations are also utilised.
- The school is striving to improve the quality of geography, raise attainment for higher attaining pupils and ensure that the curriculum includes opportunities for the progressive development of mapwork and fieldwork skills. It demonstrates a good capacity to continue to improve its work in geography.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the opportunities for higher attaining pupils to attain the highest levels in geography
- continuing to enhance the curriculum to ensure that there is a precise focus on the progressive development of pupils' mapwork and fieldwork skills
- evaluating recent changes to the leadership and management of humanities (geography and history) to assess the impact on achievement in geography.

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

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector