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Mrs Shirley Franklin  
Headteacher  
Toft Hill Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Franklin

### **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 26 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 one assembly and two geography lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

#### **Achievement in geography**

Achievement in geography is good.

- Pupils make good progress from a range of starting points to attain standards above national expectations in geography.
- Pupils acquire a wide range of knowledge and understanding about geography. They have well-developed locational knowledge and make appropriate use of geographical vocabulary.
- Pupils develop their own sense of identity and concern for other people and the environment well through their studies of geography. They demonstrate a good understanding of their own locality, the similarities and differences between places and a detailed knowledge and understanding of physical geography through their work on rivers and mountains.

- Pupils are very enthusiastic and say that geography is one of their favourite subjects. They particularly enjoy visits in the locality, meeting visitors to the school and hearing about the variety of environmental projects that pupils in the school are involved in.
- Behaviour in geography lessons is very good, reflecting teacher's high expectations. Pupils happily engage in meaningful, independent and collaborative learning tasks that help them to ask and answer questions about the world in which they live.

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

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers have relevant subject knowledge and understand what constitutes good learning in geography. Lessons are planned well and sequenced. Teachers and teaching assistants make effective use of observation and high-quality questioning during lessons to reshape activities and enhance geographical learning.
- Good or better teaching motivates and engages pupils in interesting geography lessons, offering appropriate levels of challenge for pupils of different abilities. As a result, all pupils make good progress in their geographical learning.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to think, solve problems, study real issues and confidently share their views and opinions. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils acted as experts helping a new alpine ski resort to identify areas prone to risk from avalanches. They designed avalanche prevention measures, provided advice for tourists on how to keep safe and used their knowledge of mountain ranges to make computer animation scenarios.
- The school has a good range of geographical resources and makes very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. This includes the use of a virtual learning environment where pupils can post their geographical questions for others to answer.
- Good use is made of the school's own grounds. Provision of outdoor shelters means that children can work outside in all weathers.
- The school has an accurate view of geographical attainment and teachers keep records of the progress that pupils make in their geographical learning. The school is aware of the need to develop an assessment portfolio of samples of pupils' geographical work linked to National Curriculum levels to evidence pupils' attainment

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

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- Curriculum planning and schemes of work ensure coverage of statutory requirements and provide a relevant context for geographical learning.
- The curriculum is tailored well to meet the needs of pupils in this school community. Very good use is made of visits and visitors to raise pupils' awareness of local and global issues.
- Effective links with a range of local agencies, including environmental and charitable groups, are used well to enrich the curriculum. For example, Year 4 pupils are currently working with the local parish council to improve the village as part of the John Muir environmental award. Involvement in these activities enables pupils to make a positive contribution to improving their own locality. They are also involved in raising funds to help people in other parts of the world to improve their environment.
- The curriculum is continually enhanced through the use of whole-school thematic fortnights each summer and a number of international mini-topics, for example, 'Children of the world'. This ensures that it remains flexible and responsive and that the pupils can participate in available opportunities to enrich and enhance their learning.
- Appropriate links are made with other curriculum areas and good use is made of geography to develop pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. However, the geography curriculum currently lacks a precise enough focus on the progressive development of pupils' geographical skills.
- High-quality displays around the school and in classrooms are used well to celebrate the effective geography curriculum, pupils' growing knowledge and understanding of the world and the geography-related awards that the school holds.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- The newly appointed subject leader has a clearly defined role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of geography. With support, he has started to collate a potentially useful subject leader file to inform the school's self-evaluation process.
- You work well with the subject leader and the international school coordinator to ensure that geography has a prominent place in the school's curriculum and that the subject is used effectively to promote community cohesion on a variety of scales.
- The school has received a number of geography-related awards including a silver Eco award and the International Schools Award.
- The subject leader has been able to access useful staff development opportunities available from the local authority and subject associations.

- The school is striving to improve the quality of geography and demonstrates a good capacity to improve its work.

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

- developing a portfolio of samples of geographical work, annotated against National Curriculum levels, to provide detailed evidence of pupils' attainment
- auditing the curriculum to ensure that there is a precise focus on the progressive development of pupils' geographical skills
- developing a detailed subject leader monitoring and evaluation file to evidence strengths and areas for development as part of the school's self-evaluation process.

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**