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Mrs D Bidgood
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bidgood

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 14 February 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: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observations of an assembly and one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils, regardless of their starting points, make good progress to attain standards in line with or above age-related expectations. This is because of the good-quality teaching, the meaningful geographical learning experiences and excellent relationships in the school.
- Pupils develop their own sense of identity and show great concern for other people and places. They have a good understanding of local, global and topical issues and use a range of geographical vocabulary well. Pupils have a good knowledge of where places are, the similarities and differences between them and how they are interconnected.
- Pupils say learning about geography is 'fun'. They particularly appreciate the first-hand learning experiences provided by visits out of school and

memorable presentations by visitors to school. Older pupils explained that the way in which they learn about geography helps them to 'better understand what is happening in the world'.

- Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning in geography. They enthusiastically answer questions, take great pride in their work and behave in an exemplary manner in lessons.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand what constitutes effective learning in geography. Lessons are planned well and sequenced carefully to capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm and help them to acquire appropriate geographical knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their opinions and work together to reflect their findings. For example, in an excellent Year 5 and 6 lesson observed, pupils were introduced to the physical processes at work in the journey of the River Severn from its source to its mouth. They learnt how to interpret visual images and make effective use of atlases. A well-structured series of collaborative learning activities motivated and engaged pupils by offering appropriate levels of challenge for pupils of differing abilities. Pupils were able to describe the river's journey and make precise use of language and geographical terminology. They were then able to compare their findings with work they had previously completed about the River Usk.
- 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. As a result, they are able to ask, as well as answer, geographical questions well.
- The school has a good range of geographical resources and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and 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 their attainment and measure the progress that they make in their geographical learning.
- Although books are marked regularly, comments are not always focused sharply on pupils' next steps in geography.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- All groups of pupils, in the four mixed-age classes, have equal access to the curriculum, through a well-designed two-yearly cycle of planned geographically focused units of work and complementary cross-curricular topics.

- Geographical topics are modified continually to provide a firm foundation for the development of geographical knowledge and understanding. The school is aware that its current review of the foundation subject curriculum needs to pay more specific attention to the progressive development of geographical skills.
- The curriculum provides a relevant context for learning and is well tailored to meet the needs of pupils in this school community. Very good use is made of visits and visitors to raise pupils' awareness of issues, the locality and other cultures and places.
- The school's International Schools Award status is used appropriately to enhance the geography curriculum. There is a good emphasis on using geography to promote community cohesion at a range of scales from the local to the global.
- Significant attention is paid to topical and sustainability issues. This ensures that the curriculum remains flexible and responsive and that pupils can participate in available opportunities to enrich and enhance their learning. For example, in the food miles assembly pupils were actively involved in discovering where the raw ingredients for a pizza came from and how many miles they had travelled. This prompted pupils to think about how we use the world's resources.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to sustaining and improving their own environment through planting trees, producing food in the school garden, recycling paper, composting and walking to school. They take responsible action to help others by raising money to support communities in different parts 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 ensuring that the subject has a prominent place in the school's curriculum.
- A detailed geography policy is in place.
- As a result of your informal monitoring and evaluation activities, you have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in geography.
- You are able to access staff development opportunities available from the local authority and subject associations.
- The school is continually striving to improve the quality of geography and ensure that revisions to the curriculum provide greater opportunities for the progressive development of geographical skills. This demonstrates a good capacity to continue to improve its work in geography.

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 and the progress they make in their geographical learning

- improving the consistency of feedback on pupils' written work to ensure that it informs them how to improve their work in geography
- ensuring that there is a precise focus on the progressive development of pupils' geographical skills when finalising the school's revised approach to planning and delivering the foundation subject curriculum from the summer term 2011.

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