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Mr J Wood
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Dear Mr Wood

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 1 March 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 observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- There was good evidence of pupils' high-quality independent research on geographical topics. They respond well to various environmental issues encountered during their fieldwork visits. This has led them to a deep understanding of the different demands made on the environment by humankind.
- Pupils develop a sophisticated understanding of geographical terms and can name a wide range of features that they would expect to see in areas of coastal erosion. Their knowledge of rivers develops appropriately and they have posted some of their work on the River Severn on a website for other schools to use.

- Pupils have embraced modern technology and they use this effectively to check their position on maps relative to other places. They were observed doing this in preparation for their visit to Wiltshire.
- Their knowledge of the United Kingdom and Europe is better than average. They are exceptionally aware of international geographical events. They could discuss fluently the impact of the Icelandic Volcano, the earthquake in New Zealand and the location of countries experiencing political turbulence.
- Good-quality fieldwork experiences enthuse pupils in most year groups. In Year 3, they study Portishead in detail and their visits to water and sewage treatment plants further up the school add to their understanding of the impact of humans on the water cycle and the environment.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers get pupils to pose their own geographical questions and encourage them effectively to seek answers using the good range of resources available.
- Pupils benefit from seeing interesting films and information on the school's interactive whiteboards. Follow-up activities are stimulating and involve good team or partner work.
- Teachers use news programmes effectively to ensure that pupils are up to date on issues around the world. They have also established links with children in four countries which give pupils a meaningful insight into the lives of less economically privileged children.
- The innovative home-learning programme (which replaces homework) and the special Friday activities, where pupils work in mixed-aged house groups, both have a good impact on their knowledge and understanding of geographical topics.
- The special opportunities which teachers create on the environmental field visits give pupils time to reflect and appreciate the world as well as building up their teamwork skills.
- Assessment is astute and helps pupils to move on to the next step in their learning.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The well-balanced curriculum includes both a good range of physical geography, such as the coastal and river work, as well as human aspects, such as tourist attractions.
- The curriculum is adjusted each year to meet the needs of the pupils. The school is aware of the limited field work in Year 4; otherwise access to fieldwork is good.

- Cross-curricular links are strong particularly through English, where, for example, stories of sailing have led to pupils developing a very good idea about the world's oceans and important ports.
- Links with mathematics are less effective. However, aspects, such as weather recording and analysis, could be reintroduced into the learning programme.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) for presentation and publication of geographical information is exceptionally good. Pupils are very confident and are keen to use a range of techniques to enhance their work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- The staff team all plays their part in ensuring that lessons are effectively taught and follow the curriculum. Monitoring of pupils' work by the coordinator is effective. The recent audit showed where gaps had developed and prompt action was taken to address these.
- The coordinator regularly discusses pupils' work with colleagues and gives teachers appropriate feedback on what has been well understood and what needs further reinforcement.
- Management arrangements allow senior managers to add their own flair and knowledge to the subject; for example, your own ICT skills and first-hand experience of the Middle East. Teachers benefit from the international exchange programme.
- The school has recently achieved an International School Award showing the strong links it has developed overseas. The improved community cohesion plan is appropriately linked to the school's geography programme.
- Staff bring a good range of geographical knowledge to their lessons but acknowledge that the lack of links with the subject association are a missed opportunity to develop still further. Despite this, geography is a dynamic subject within the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing stronger cross-curricular links between mathematics and geography
- joining a national association for geography to further support the development of the subject in the school
- improving, if time permits, fieldwork provision in Year 4.

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

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector