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Mrs N Gordon  
Headteacher  
Avishayes Community Primary School  
Fairway Rise  
Chard  
Somerset  
TA20 1NS

Dear Mrs Gordon

### **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 2 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons including Forest School work on the school site.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

### **Achievement in geography**

Achievement in geography is good.

- Pupils enter the school with a wide range of abilities including many that are below those expected for their age. They make very rapid progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils make good progress to attain in line with national expectations.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners and clearly enjoy the many varied geographical activities provided, such as the Year 6 debate on the proposed by-pass. They develop good thinking skills and are able to argue their case persuasively.
- Pupils have good information and communication technology skills which they use to find information about other places, design presentations, and produce high-quality tourist leaflets for the locality.

- Pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of the wider world. They show empathy with children of their own age in other countries where daily life is more difficult. They are aware of the impact of earthquakes and floods.
- Pupils' geographical vocabulary develops well and Year 3 pupils worked hard to identify which features of an Indian village were manmade and which were natural. They tackle difficult concepts with gusto and imagination.
- Pupils benefit from plenty of outdoor experience including participating in the excellent Forest School initiative. Their fieldwork skills develop appropriately both in the locality and further afield, especially when these are successfully linked to pupils' residential experiences.
- Pupils are proud of the school environment and take good care of it. Their work on developing the wooden playground castle and tunnel with the bursar gave them a strong sense of the importance of sustainability linked to design and sourcing of materials.

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

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, use it to enthuse pupils and make them think geographical issues through for themselves. The youngest pupils enjoyed looking at how roadworks lead to traffic jams as they rode around a carefully designed scenario on their bikes. They also considered what to pack in their suitcases for an animal safari trip! Older pupils dealt with how to preserve food in a hot climate as well as the pros and cons of the by-pass going through an area of natural beauty.
- Lessons are well planned and they are devised so that pupils build their skills in a meaningful and progressive sequence. For example, their skills in map reading develop appropriately. They also gain a good understanding of the relationship of England with other countries using both atlases and globes.
- Pupils have good opportunities to work independently as well as in groups. The home learning projects show how good they are at presenting their ideas to others.
- Their work is marked regularly and pupils are told how to improve in general terms but the comments are not always sufficiently linked to the pupils' next steps in geographical learning.
- Teachers make accurate observations and use a good range of questioning skills to ensure that learning is well paced and that pupils understand the topics being covered. The school has an accurate view of pupils' progress and it compares each year group's work to the levels set for pupils of their age in the National Curriculum. Reports to parents are based on sound evidence.

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

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities and is based on the school's vision statement: 'creating unlimited opportunities for our children'. The school lives up to this high aspiration. Links with children in other parts of the world, including the USA and India, bring geographical learning to life for pupils.
- Field visits and residential experiences support pupils' social and emotional well-being, provide outdoor adventures and a better understanding of both environmental and sustainability issues impacting on farming today.
- Work is topical, well matched to pupils' needs and acknowledges and celebrates the increased diversity within the school community. Pupils are aware of world issues related to floods and earthquakes.
- In most year groups pupils have a good amount of time for geography apart from in Year 6 where time is more limited.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- You are driving the subject forward very effectively and have a newly qualified teacher who is currently learning the role of the coordinator.
- You undertook Forest School training and know what the aims are for the programme but rightly delegate much of the day-to-day work in this project to trained assistants. A governor also takes an active part in this work.
- Effective links have been made with many local agencies, including an environmental group and local organisations such as Chard in Bloom. These organisations help pupils to understand how the community works and how they can be active participants.
- The resources and support provided by the subject associations have not been used by the school to support staff development.
- The school is constantly reviewing and developing the subject. There is a good capacity to continue enriching it further as the overall curriculum is strong and diverse.

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

- extending the opportunities for Year 6 to reinforce their geographical skills through cross-curricular links to compensate for the limited time currently available to teach the subject
- developing links with the subject association to enable staff to be provided with training on the latest geography software as well as ideas for developing the subject further.

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**