

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs P Day
Headteacher
St Peter's C of E Primary School
Bellamy Road
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG18 4LN

Dear Mrs Day

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 26 September 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 parts of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of knowledge and understanding of the world that are generally below those of most four-year-olds, but with a wide range.
- Interesting units of work help children increase their understanding of their locality and knowledge of the world in which they live. This, combined with good teaching and accurate assessment, enables children to make good progress. As a result, they enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment.
- Standards of attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2 are improving. Consistently good teaching coupled with a stimulating curriculum is helping pupils make good progress. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of their immediate locality and these develop well as they move through the

school because pupils are able to compare and contrast their own area with other places such as Ferry Farm and Eyam.

- Pupils have developed a good understanding of physical geography through, for example, their study of rivers and mountains. Focused study and events such as International Days have helped pupils to increase their knowledge of different countries.
- A good emphasis is placed on developing geographical vocabulary as well as observational skills. Pupils are able to use globes and atlases effectively. They use a variety of maps well in classrooms or as part of their fieldwork studies to support their learning.
- Last year, the attainment of the majority of pupils by the end of Year 6 was average. However, this represented good progress from their starting points. An increasing proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 cohort is completing work at the higher levels. Consequently, they are on track to achieve above average attainment.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and talk enthusiastically about their work. All were engaged in meaningful and appropriate activities in the lessons observed. Most pupils behave well and this makes a significant contribution to their learning, especially when working cooperatively in groups.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers motivate and engage pupils well by planning and delivering interesting lessons. A good variety of activities and resources is used to generate interest. Work is well matched to pupils' individual needs with suitable challenge provided for most. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support individuals or groups of pupils.
- Good explanations, combined with effective questioning, ensure that most lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers have good geographical knowledge which ensures that most pupils make good progress in lessons. Occasionally, the pace of learning slackens because pupils spend too much time on a task before being encouraged or expected to move on.
- Teachers' use of assessment is good. They check progress against key skill statements and annotate their findings in medium-term plans which are then used to inform planning. Pupils are also assessed at the end of each unit. Analysis of data confirms that pupils are making good progress.
- Examples of pupils' work retained by the subject leader show a wide range of work covered. However, these have not been annotated or matched to National Curriculum outcomes.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The curriculum is suitably broad and sequentially builds on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Schemes of work were revised two years ago and the modified programmes have proved enjoyable for pupils. They have been reviewed again following the completion of the two-year cycle.
- A good variety of fieldwork opportunities is provided. These opportunities include using the school grounds, orienteering at the neighbouring secondary school and visiting places further afield such as Sherwood Pines, Hartington and Alston in Cumbria.
- These visits enrich the curriculum and extend pupils' first-hand experiences of the themes they are studying. Pupils speak very positively about these experiences. However, there is a lack of sufficient measuring equipment to further support learning in fieldwork.
- Links with other subjects such as mathematics, music, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) are well established. For example, data analysis following a traffic survey or considering rivers in bible stories are typical examples of how the subject is developed across the curriculum.
- The development of the school's raised gardens is increasing pupils' understanding of sustainability and environmental issues.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- An appropriate range of monitoring and evaluation strategies has been undertaken by the subject leader. These ensure that she has a good understanding of the strengths in the subject and those areas requiring further development. A report summarising these has been prepared for staff and governors along with the construction of a suitable action plan for improvement.
- The subject policy has recently been revised and is appropriate. Classroom resources have been regularly updated and replenished. Consequently, there is a plentiful supply of maps, globes and atlases.
- The subject leader has not recently used the resources and support available from commercial sources or subject associations to keep her informed of new developments in the subject or take opportunities for further development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing an annotated portfolio of assessed work linked to National Curriculum level descriptors to moderate staff judgements and show progression through the school
- purchasing more measuring resources to support fieldwork activities
- using the resources and guidance of subject associations to further support the development of the subject.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop geography in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector