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Mrs T Casburn
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Casburn

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 21 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- Pupils develop a very good locational knowledge and recall their prior learning impressively well, including some very complex physical processes that they studied last year. Their knowledge and understanding are secure because so much of their learning is experiential. For example, coastal erosion was modelled on a local beach as 'kung fu'!
- Pupils acquire skills in fieldwork and handle data confidently. They search, sort and interpret information and develop independent learning from an early age. They articulate their ideas and understanding exceptionally well.
- Pupils are curious in finding out about the world around them, its natural environment and the people who live there. For example, they know about local coastal erosion and demonstrate a good understanding of how human and physical environments are interrelated.
- Pupils enjoy geography because learning is fun and they are given considerable independence, for example collaborating in teams on

challenging assignments or researching topics using the internet. The recent whole-school learning day involved pupils 'checking in' on Aldborough Airlines to discover different countries around the world!

- They have a good grasp of current and contemporary issues and understand how places and people are interdependent and interconnected. Pupils learn about geographical decision-making, sustainable development and learn how to be active citizens.
- During the last year, pupils and parents have become actively involved in sustainable development projects and have successfully lobbied the government on overseas aid as well as the local council to ensure that their access road is gritted in winter. A group recently visited Downing Street to petition the Prime Minister on the 'Send My Sister to School' campaign.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Pupils are well taught. Lessons focus suitably on specific skills or aspects of learning that pupils should acquire, although marking and assessment do not reflect this sharp focus.
- Learning activities are carefully planned so that pupils are actively engaged at all times. Resources are carefully prepared with good stimulus material to support learning, including photographs, atlases, pupils' own work and information and communication technology resources.
- Some lessons make use of information from Geographical Information Systems to develop pupils' locational knowledge, but opportunities are sometimes missed to use maps, show aerial images and visualise routes or calculate distances.
- Teachers are imaginative in consolidating learning by routinely making links through other subjects. Year 3 and 4 pupils made rain music and consolidated their learning about the River Nile's water system and farming in ancient Egypt. In physical education the Year 4 and 5 pupils had much fun using 'cardinal cones' to expend their energy.
- Teachers and other adults are alert to opportunities to build pupils' geographical knowledge and vocabulary. Assemblies and guided reading activities, for example, routinely make reference to places to extend pupils' locational knowledge. Events such as the Tour of Britain Cycle Race immediately generate a display, complete with a route map.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The curriculum covers a suitable range of topics at different scales and contexts, with a variety of physical and human themes. Key geographical concepts, such as interdependence and sustainability, are clearly identified, but topics do not always focus on key questions or the progressive development of specific skills.

- Schemes of work provide imaginative opportunities for learning and a very broad range of experiences which contribute well to the pupils' personal development. The pupils' learning is greatly enhanced by the school's wider curriculum.
- Links with a school in Malawi have been a catalyst for learning. Significantly, the connection is seen as a learning partnership, with collaborative and comparative studies on topics such as 'how we travel to school' and 'weather and climate'.
- The school's environment is an excellent learning resource. As an Eco School it educates pupils about sustainable energy and resource management, and they are also encouraged to take advantage of the extensive grounds, which include bird hides and woodland.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- Suitable procedures are in place for monitoring provision and outcomes. Geography is currently a key priority on the school development plan, and recent work has usefully strengthened systems for assessing curriculum coverage and pupils' progress. The matrix for recording pupils' attainment is simple but efficient.
- Although the school has had no recent subject training or enrichment, the curriculum leader routinely reviews schemes of work. This ensures that work is topical, that teaching is creative and that learning is fun.
- Importantly, pupils are immersed in geography on a daily basis because relevant issues are constantly highlighted and discussed in assemblies, in class and through displays in public areas of the school. Out-of-classroom learning is seen as an essential component of the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing and updating the programme of study to focus topics on specific inquiry questions and mapping more closely the delivery of identified skills
- sharpening routine marking and assessment more precisely in regard to the specific aspects of geographical understanding and skills being developed.

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 Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector