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Miss J Turner
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Dear Miss Turner

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 19 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; learning walks; and observation of three lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of geography is outstanding.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is outstanding.

- Pupils attain standards that are above national age-related expectations. They make excellent progress in gaining geographical skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. This is because of the challenging teaching, the excellent relationships and the very meaningful approaches used. These include the very effective use of enquiry, fieldwork and literature in lessons which captures pupils' curiosity and enables them to make sense of the world around them.
- Pupils develop their own sense of identify and concern for other people. They have a very good sense of place, interdependence and social justice. For example, Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to gain insights about the issues facing Palestine and Israel from their study of Michael Morpurgo's novel *The Kites are Flying*.

- Pupils have very good core geographical knowledge and well-developed mapwork skills. This is because the school gives high priority to learning and using a range of geographical vocabulary with great accuracy and precision and to using and interpreting maps, including Ordnance Survey maps, at a range of scales.
- Pupils have a very good knowledge of topical and environmental issues and an excellent understanding of human and physical geography at a local, national and global level. They leave Year 6 as confident, independent learners with a range of geographical enquiry skills, excellent locational knowledge and with practical experience of making a positive contribution to their own environment.
- Pupils are actively engaged in taking responsible action as local and global citizens. The school holds the Stephen Lawrence Award for community cohesion, the Eco bronze and silver awards and has fair trade status.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is outstanding.

- All of the teaching observed was outstanding. Teachers plan high-quality learning experiences which cater effectively for individual needs. High-quality questioning involves all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to ask as well as answer geographical questions.
- Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to think, solve problems, look at real issues and confidently share their views and opinions. For example, during the visit, Year 6 pupils were learning how to write a balanced argument to answer the question 'Is Morrison's beneficial to Kirkstall?'
- Lessons are very carefully structured to ensure that concepts and skills are learnt and practised before pupils move on in their learning. Stretch and challenge activities, including an Africa project, are provided to meet the needs of higher-achieving pupils.
- Pupils are fully engaged and appropriately challenged in meaningful enquiry activities inside and outside the classroom based on the school's '3 Rs for geography': '*relevant*, *real* work and *relating* to the pupils, the community and beyond.
- Extensive use is made of a wide range of up-to-date primary and secondary resources and teaching and learning strategies, including information and communication technology (ICT) where relevant. For example, during the visit, Year 2 pupils were using a database to record their address, postcode and how they travel to school.
- Teachers carefully check on pupils' understanding in lessons and monitor their progress and attainment in geography in comparison with national age-related expectations. Assessment judgements are carefully moderated and the subject leader maintains an extensive portfolio of examples of pupils' work. However, these examples do not as yet contain detailed annotations of National Curriculum levels to aid moderation by other staff

or include examples of marking that show pupils exactly how to improve their work in geography.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is outstanding.

- The school has retained a single-subject approach to teaching geography. The subject is taught in focused topics over a period of three to four weeks, each half term, throughout the school.
- The geography curriculum is continually reviewed and enhanced to meet the changing cultural and linguistic needs of the local community and its pupils and ensure that they can learn from and about others. This ensures that it is flexible and responsive and provides a relevant context for learning.
- There is a very good emphasis on topical events through the use of assemblies, corridor displays and newspapers. For example, Year 3 pupils had recently monitored the impact of Hurricane Katia on life in a number of countries.
- Fieldwork is a very strong feature of provision. Pupils of all ages are provided with excellent opportunities to learn from extensive first-hand experiences in the immediate locality. Pupils also go on residential fieldwork to Castleton in Derbyshire in Year 6 and complete a river study at the Nell Bank Centre, near Ilkley, in Year 4.
- There is a strong emphasis on geography at a local, national and global scale but the European dimension of the curriculum is currently underdeveloped.
- The school has established good partnership links with a rural school in Yorkshire to enhance its work on a contrasting locality within the United Kingdom.
- Links with literacy, numeracy and ICT are well established. There are very strong links between the teaching of geography and English. High-quality work in speaking, listening and writing has accelerated pupils' progress in geography.
- Homework is used effectively to ensure that pupils learn about key geographical vocabulary. At the time of the visit the school hall was filled with exciting two- and three-dimensional work and excellent examples of different types of writing based on pupils' summer holiday destinations as part of the annual whole-school 'holiday challenge'.
- High-quality displays around the school celebrate the outstanding curriculum, its significant emphasis on enquiry, fieldwork and vocabulary and pupils' well-developed knowledge and understanding of the world.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is outstanding and demonstrates an excellent capacity to continue to improve provision further.

- Geography retains a strong profile in the school. Staff work tirelessly together to continually share best practice and improve the quality of provision.
- The subject leader has a clearly defined role in the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the subject throughout the school. Extremely accurate annual self-assessments are used to identify strengths and areas for further development. These inform action plans which tackle issues and result in continuous self-improvement.
- The subject leader is a geography specialist. She has a detailed understanding of progression in geography. Her thorough analysis of pupils' work, teachers' planning, learning objectives, observations of teaching and discussions with staff and pupils enable her to assess curriculum coverage and the quality of pupils' learning with great precision.
- Progress and attainment data are collected and analysed robustly to identify trends and differences.
- The subject leader makes extremely effective use of benchmarking, including subject association guidance and national reports, to enhance practice in the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- enhancing the existing portfolio of samples of pupils' geographical work to include:
 - detailed annotations of National Curriculum levels to aid staff moderation
 - good exemplars of marking and feedback which show pupils how to improve their work.
- ensuring that pupils' develop a greater knowledge and understanding of the geography of Europe and its rich and diverse cultures.

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

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector