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Mrs B Atkinson
Headteacher
St Anne's CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Atkinson

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 14 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement is satisfactory overall but improving and on occasions good.

- Pupils get a good start in Reception and make good progress in developing awareness of their immediate surrounding and the wider world around them. This is very well supported by numerous opportunities to observe and interact with both the outdoor and the local environment.
- Learning is more variable and fragmented until Year 6. In some years, where there is a clear geography focus in some of the taught units, learning can be good. However, it is less secure where geography merely provides a context for learning in other subjects.
- The school, itself, has identified that pupils were underachieving in the subject and is now striving hard to rectify this. Standards are improving although both geographical and fieldwork skills remain underdeveloped. A more comprehensive programme of fieldwork and outdoor learning is in

place this academic year to address this area of weakness and this is intended to fast-track improvement.

- Pupils make very good progress in Year 6 because the sustainability theme is especially well developed. Learning is good because of the clear planning and good subject expertise.
- By the time they leave school, Year 6 pupils are beginning to show greater awareness of the world around them and have a good understanding of the need to lead more sustainable lifestyles.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons. They are responsive and enjoy working collaboratively and practically. They are keen to learn and are responding positively to the improved geography learning opportunities now being offered.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good overall.

- The lessons observed during the inspection were all of high quality with the majority judged outstanding.
- Teaching is consistently good or outstanding in those units linked to sustainability where there is a clear focus, resources are appropriate and teachers are confident and clear about what they are teaching.
- Teachers have very good generic teaching skills which they can apply to lessons to engage and motivate pupils. They are less confident teaching geographically. The changes being initiated by the management of the school are proving beneficial in improving the quality of geography provision but have yet to be fully reflected in the learning.
- In the lessons observed, teachers engaged all pupils and maintained a very good momentum. Questioning skills were particularly good with very effective use being made of geographical enquiry which encouraged thinking. Rather than leading pupils by providing the answers, teachers guided pupils to work out the answers and promoted real discussion. As a result, pupils were challenged, inquisitive and interested.
- Evidence from pupils' work and past planning does reveal a legacy of fragmented coverage of content rather than more focused and secure geographical learning.
- Appropriate and effective use is made of new technology in lessons to illustrate ideas and bring geographical features to life, especially through the use of photographs and film clips. These resources are used interactively to engage pupils and maintain their interest.
- Assessment remains a contradiction. Where units are well planned, teachers are able to assess outcomes more effectively. In those areas where coverage has been more superficial, assessment is problematic and less secure.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is currently satisfactory but improving.

- The school has identified weaknesses in the curriculum and has over the last two years been rectifying this through a sequenced programme of improvement. The curriculum currently remains a work in progress and is under frequent review with further improvements planned over this coming year.
- The elements of the curriculum which are outstanding are those linked particularly to sustainability and the environment. Where sustainability permeates through a unit of work, the outcomes for pupils are at least good.
- The current overview of the subject provides a broad and balanced curriculum which the school is now beginning to deliver across all classes.
- Fieldwork is identified as a strong component of the current revised curriculum and, if delivered throughout the year as planned, will rectify gaps in current provision, particularly in the development of geographical and mapwork skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- Leadership has identified weaknesses in the subject and has a long-term vision for improving provision. Improvements in the planned curriculum are clearly evident as well as in those units of work linked to the environment.
- Training linked to sustainability has improved teacher expertise and confidence to teach this aspect of the curriculum. Good use has been made of local authority and other support in this area.
- Resources currently available are satisfactory overall. The school is well stocked with atlases and globes, but lacks the range and variety of resources to teach some units in sufficient depth.
- Currently, the resources and support provided by the subject associations have not been accessed and used.
- The senior leadership team is supportive of the need to build on the good generic skills of the teaching staff in order to develop subject expertise. There is also recognition that the quality and range of the resources made available to teach the subject effectively needs enhancing. There is good capacity for improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- finalising the planning for the geography focused units of work to ensure:
 - raised standards through clear progression in knowledge, skills and understanding

- the application and use of quality resources to support teaching and learning and engagement with pupils
 - that teachers are confident in understanding what they need to do to ensure coverage and delivery of good geographical learning experiences
- using the resources and support provided by the subject associations to further improve provision and learning in the classroom and develop teachers' confidence to teach geographically.

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

Leszek Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector