

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



6 October 2011

Mr S Lawrence
Headteacher
Hornsea School and Language College
Eastgate
Hornsea
HU18 1DW

Dear Mr Lawrence

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 21 and 22 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of 11 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory but improving.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is satisfactory overall but improving especially in examination classes.

- Attainment is below the national average at Key Stage 3 because students experience gaps in their learning due to a fragmented curriculum. There is a lack of depth to their understanding of the changing human and physical geography of the United Kingdom and the European Union. They have a satisfactory understanding of wider global issues.
- Skills, especially map skills, are often taught in isolation and there is a lack of progression as the students move through the key stage. Students' locational knowledge is weak at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The development of fieldwork skills is satisfactory. However, geographical information systems (GIS) skills are not being developed.

- Standards at GCSE have consistently been in line with national averages. However, there has been a significant improvement in 2011 when standards were good. Assessment records suggest this improvement will be sustained this year.
- Traditionally, few students take the subject at A level. However, those that do achieve well and standards are consistently above national averages.
- Students are beginning to develop more independent learning skills as the department focuses on broadening the range of teaching approaches used. Students are enjoying these new freedoms and the greater opportunities offered to work collaboratively. More positive attitudes towards the subject are evidenced through increased uptake in examinations, particularly at GCSE.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory overall and improving.

- The quality of teaching is better in examination classes than at Key Stage 3. When appropriate resources and strategies are used it is more frequently good.
- Lessons reflect the changing philosophy of the department which is focused on greater engagement with students in lessons. A wider repertoire of teaching approaches is used on a regular basis. Lessons are more engaging than previously and students expressed positive opinions about the many recent changes made.
- Lesson planning is detailed. However, at Key Stage 3, the pace is often dictated by a rapid succession of activities rather than the learning. As a result, students are often given too little time to reflect and consolidate their learning or investigate in greater depth. In the good lessons, the focus is more clearly on the learning outcomes for students rather than the teaching.
- All students tend to complete the same work. More able students are not always sufficiently challenged, especially at Key Stage 3. Less able students are not provided with the scaffolding to enable them to access some tasks and often their work is incomplete. Inappropriate use of complex texts also causes difficulties.
- New technology is used frequently by teachers for exemplification but is used less effectively to interact with the students. Teachers' explanations are often oral rather than clarified through visual exposition.
- Assessment procedures are more secure in examination classes where teachers are familiar with the criteria. At Key Stage 3, assessment procedures are being reviewed but remain a work in progress. Students know their grades but are less clear about what this means in terms of knowledge and understanding.
- Where non-specialists are teaching the subject in Year 7 through integrated humanities, the focus is often on coverage. Weaker subject knowledge means that misconceptions are not always clarified or

challenged. For example, by misplacing weathering for erosion during a discussion about coastal landform formation.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is satisfactory overall but there are weaknesses, especially at Key Stage 3.

- The curriculum is a work in progress. The scheme of work at Key Stage 3 is incomplete. The school has also identified that there are limited opportunities for quality geography planned into the integrated humanities course. This is also under review. At Key Stage 3, there is currently a lack of cohesive structure to the planning to ensure the progressive development of geographical knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum focuses primarily on broad global issues. There is a lack of depth to case studies and limited opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the changing physical and human geography of the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- Students receive adequate opportunities to experience fieldwork at Key Stage 3 through visits to the nearby Holderness Coast and Hornsea. At Key Stage 4 and A level, examination requirements are met.
- In examination classes, basic curriculum requirements are met through the adoption of sample schemes of work provided by the examination boards. These have not yet been fully adapted to meet the specific circumstances of the school or the needs of some students.
- Students have only limited opportunities to progressively develop and consolidate maps skills especially through the use of Ordnance Survey maps. Requirements for GIS are currently not being met.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good with a good capacity for further improvement.

- The new subject leader has made good progress in changing the culture of the subject which now has a more prominent profile around the school. This has resulted in a significant take-up at GCSE this year.
- She has a clear vision of how the subject is to be developed. However, although some improvements are evident, notably in teaching, much remains a work in progress, especially in terms of the development of the curriculum.
- A collegiate approach has raised staff morale and enables progress to be made in the acceptance and use of a wider range of teaching approaches to engage students. The impact of this on learning has yet to be fully seen.
- Monitoring procedures are only satisfactory. A more rigorous process for monitoring the coverage and quality of students' work is being established. The impact of this is yet to be seen.

- There is some sharing of good practice, particularly in terms of teaching approaches. However, subject-specific professional development has been limited. The resources and support of the subject associations have not been used.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving standards, especially at Key Stage 3
- creating a scheme of work which:
 - progressively develops students' knowledge and understanding
 - ensures that students learn in more detail about the geography of Europe and the United Kingdom to support their understanding of their role as citizens of Europe
 - identifies appropriate teaching activities and approaches which will support learning in greater depth
 - ensures that mapwork and GIS skills are developed appropriately
- using the resources and support provided by the subject associations to improve provision and develop non-specialist subject expertise in particular.

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