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Miss F Crellin
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Dear Miss Crellin

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 3 October 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; observation of five lessons and a learning walk in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is satisfactory.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of knowledge and understanding of the world that are low in relation to age-related expectations. In particular, many children have weaknesses in their speaking and listening skills, vocabulary and limited experience beyond their immediate locality.
- An emphasis on relevant play-related activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, together with good teaching in both key stages, ensures that pupils make good progress in their acquisition of geographical knowledge and understanding. Geographical skills, especially fieldwork, are less well developed. Pupils attain standards broadly in line with national age-related expectations by the end of Year 6.

- The school does not currently have a system in place to ensure that it has an accurate and moderated view of geographical attainment by the end of each key stage.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of distant places and learn to use a range of maps and atlases well. For example, in Year 1, a 'continent song' had been used well to ensure that all pupils could identify accurately the continents on a world map. However, pupils' knowledge of the geography of the United Kingdom and its diverse cultures by the end of Year 6 is limited.
- Limited use is made of the school's outdoor environment to support learning. The development of fieldwork skills is an area that the school has identified as a priority for further development.
- Pupils say they enjoy learning about different places and researching and improving their geographical knowledge of where places are and what they are like to live in. They particularly enjoy the visits they make out of school and the homework challenges they are set.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. All behaved well and were engaged in appropriate activities in the lessons observed.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and understand what constitutes effective learning in the subject. They motivate and engage pupils and deliver interesting and relevant lessons. All of the teaching observed was good.
- Older pupils have good opportunities to think, solve problems, look at real issues and confidently share their views and opinions. For example, during the visit, Year 5 pupils investigated shanty towns in Sao Paul, Brazil by asking questions of two local residents, role-played by the teacher.
- Lessons are carefully structured to ensure that teachers take pupils' prior learning experiences into account and sequentially develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Good use is made of a wide range of resources and teaching and learning strategies, including information and communication technology (ICT) where relevant. For example, during the visit, Year 6 pupils made good use of search facilities on the internet to check whether information about places was either true or false.
- Topics culminate in motivating homework challenges. For example, in Year 4, pupils were asked to record whether they and their families acted in an environmentally friendly way.
- A variety of assessment strategies is in place. In lessons, teachers constantly make good use of questioning to check on pupils' learning. Reports to parents include a comment on geography but do not make specific links to age-related expectations in the subject.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is satisfactory.

- The current integrated curriculum was introduced in September 2010. A thorough review has been undertaken to ensure that it is broad and sequentially builds on pupils' prior knowledge and skills in the subject. However, it currently lacks depth and an appropriate emphasis on geographical enquiry.
- Although the curriculum provides a relevant context for learning it is not well tailored to meet the needs of pupils in this particular community. Limited use is made of memorable, first-hand experiences such as visits and visitors to raise pupils' awareness of their own locality and its varied landscapes and how these contrast with other areas of the United Kingdom.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on geography at an international and global scale but the national dimension of the curriculum is currently underdeveloped.
- Older pupils are involved in taking positive action to improve their own school environment. Last year, pupils in Year 5, identified a problem in their school grounds which was resolved effectively after they wrote to a local manufacturer and the parish council.
- Links with other subjects, particularly literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are becoming increasingly established.
- Good displays around the school celebrate the breadth of the curriculum and pupils' growing knowledge and understanding of the world.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is currently satisfactory but there is good capacity to improve.

- The relatively new subject leader is enthusiastic and has specific expertise in outdoor education and educational visits. She has a good understanding of progression in geography.
- A comprehensive geography policy is in place.
- A range of effective strategies is used to monitor curriculum coverage. These strategies ensure that the school has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. A detailed subject action plan is in place to tackle resultant issues.
- The school does not currently use the resources and support available from subject associations to keep teachers informed of new developments in the subject or enable them to take opportunities for professional development.

- Plans are in place to establish links with a range of partners to enhance the quality of the curriculum and place a greater emphasis on outdoor learning and fieldwork.
- The school has appropriate resources including maps, atlases, photographs and library books.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the depth of the curriculum by:
 - adopting a more robust enquiry approach to geographical topics
 - providing more memorable, first-hand learning experiences in the immediate locality
 - developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the United Kingdom and its diverse cultures
- producing an annotated portfolio of samples of pupils' geographical work to provide moderated evidence of pupils' achievement in relation to age-related expectations in the subject
- using the support and guidance provided by subject associations to further develop the subject and provide professional development opportunities for the subject leader.

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