

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr E Read  
Headteacher  
Kingham Primary School  
Kingham  
Chipping Norton  
Oxfordshire  
OX7 6YD

Dear Mr Read

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: geography**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff, governors and pupils, during my visit on 29 November 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 a representative of the governing body, staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is outstanding.

### **Achievement in geography**

Achievement in geography is outstanding.

- Pupils make excellent progress and achieve high standards. By the end of Year 6, they have a secure grasp of a wide range of human and physical geography topics and processes ranging across a variety of scales, contexts and locations. In the lessons observed and work scrutinised, the quality of learning was consistently good and often outstanding.
- Pupils' geographical skills are a notable strength because they are systematically developed across the school. Key Stage 1 pupils, for example, confidently interpreted and constructed maps, using compass points, devising symbols and a key; Year 3 pupils analysed complex resources to compare contrasting locations over time; and Year 6 pupils skilfully interpreted new information about light pollution and independently researched and analysed the issue.

- Pupils bring a range of well-developed wider skills to their work in geography. They articulate their ideas superbly, write fluently and are able to express opinions, debate ideas and test hypotheses to reach well-argued decisions. They undertake complex geographical investigations.
- Pupils' locational knowledge is very good because, from an early age they use maps, atlases and other resources to develop a strong sense of place. They confidently locate and talk about places they have studied and have an impressive wider knowledge that stems from their interest in the world around them.
- Pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning and positive behaviour underpin their excellent learning and progress. They sustain their concentration, collaborate well when working together, and show considerable curiosity and interest in their work.

### **Quality of teaching in geography**

The quality of teaching in geography is outstanding.

- Teachers deliver lively and imaginative lessons which make excellent use of stimulating resources, including maps, information and communication technology (ICT) and multimedia, to capture pupils' interest and curiosity. Lessons are skilfully directed and managed so that all pupils are fully engaged in learning and often inspired.
- The outdoor environment is particularly well used as a resource for learning, with mapping and planning exercises based on pupils' own observations and recording. Lessons routinely encourage pupils to apply their understanding to make decisions, for example to improve their playground, their woodland habitat or the problem of light pollution.
- Work is sharply focused on specific outcomes, which are helpfully phrased as a series of 'I can' statements so that pupils can evaluate for themselves what gains they are making in their learning. Work is suitably challenging, and activities are carefully prepared so that all pupils are well supported, either with different resources or with additional guidance.
- Assessment is rigorous, with detailed summative records for every pupil. Marking is encouraging and helpful, although it does not routinely link with lesson learning objectives or identify the geographical skills or understanding that can be improved.

### **Quality of the curriculum in geography**

The quality of the curriculum in geography is outstanding.

- The recent change to a topic-based curriculum has sharpened the focus of schemes of work on the systematic development of specific skills and subject knowledge. Key concepts are mapped through schemes of work and embedded in short-term planning so that pupils make excellent progress in their learning.
- Excellent use is made of the outdoor environment so that pupils develop first-hand experience of locations within and beyond their immediate

locality. The curriculum is greatly enriched by a wide range of visitors and visits, including residential trips with a core geography focus specifically selected as contrasting locations in the United Kingdom. Pupils are able to draw on their experiences and make connections in their learning from places as contrasting as the Isle of Wight and industrial Birmingham.

- Geography makes a strong contribution to pupils' work in other areas of the curriculum, particularly literacy and ICT, and also to pupils' wider personal development. Conversely, teachers understand how to use other areas of the curriculum, such as history, to promote pupils' geographical skills, knowledge and understanding.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is outstanding.

- The subject is very well led and managed. Subject self-evaluation follows the school format and is suitably rigorous. Monitoring of provision and pupil outcomes is systematic and involves governors, who consequently have a very good understanding of the subject's effectiveness.
- Teachers share best practice and collaborate effectively to shape ongoing improvements to the curriculum. However, insufficient use is made of summative assessments of pupils' attainment to evaluate the subject's overall effectiveness and focus on aspects of learning that could be strengthened.
- Leadership is well-informed about subject developments, although staff have not recently benefited from professional development specific to geography. The school effectively draws on the expertise of local specialists such as the Cotswold Wardens and subject leaders at residential centres.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- making more effective use of your summative assessment information to analyse and review the impact of geography provision.

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**