

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



12 December 2011

Mrs K Jackson
Headteacher
St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School
Lower Street
Tettenhall
Wolverhampton
WV6 9AF

Dear Mrs Jackson

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 1 December 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, pupils and representatives from the governing body; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- Children join the Reception class from up to 20 settings. On entry, they have levels of knowledge and understanding of the world that are low in comparison with most four-year-old pupils. Interesting practical lessons and good use of the school's grounds help children increase their understanding of their locality and knowledge of the world in which they live. This, combined with good teaching and accurate assessment, enables children to make good progress. As a result, they enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment.
- Standards of attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2 are improving. Consistently good teaching coupled with a stimulating curriculum is helping pupils make good progress. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of their immediate locality and these develop well as they move through the

school because pupils are able to compare and contrast their own area with other places such as Claverley.

- Pupils have developed a good understanding of physical geography through, for example, their study of rivers and mountains. Focused study and events such as International Days have helped pupils increase their knowledge of different countries.
- A good emphasis is placed on developing geographical vocabulary as well as observational skills. Pupils are able to use globes and atlases effectively. They use a variety of maps well in classrooms or as part of their fieldwork studies to support their learning. However, the opportunity to use Ordnance Survey maps at different scales is less well developed.
- Although the attainment of the majority of pupils by the end of Year 6 is average, an increasing proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 cohort is completing work at the higher levels. Consequently, they are on track to achieve above average attainment.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and talk enthusiastically about their work. All were engaged in meaningful and appropriate activities in the lessons observed. Most pupils behave well and this makes a significant contribution to their learning, especially when working cooperatively in groups.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers motivate and engage pupils well by planning and delivering interesting lessons. A good variety of activities and resources is used to generate interest. Work is well matched to pupils' individual needs with suitable challenge provided for most. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support individuals or groups of pupils.
- Good explanations combined with secure geographical knowledge ensure that pupils make good progress in most lessons. Questioning is generally effective but it does not always challenge or extend pupils' thinking, particularly the more able.
- A variety of assessment strategies is in place. In lessons, the use of 'mini-plenaries' helps pupils understand how they are doing. Marking generally gives good guidance about how well pupils have done but it does not always give them a clear enough indication of what they need to do next to improve. Pupils have clear targets for improvement and although most know what they are, some are less sure.
- End of unit and end of year assessment is now being used more effectively by teachers in their planning to ensure that work sequentially builds on pupils' prior learning.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The curriculum is suitably broad and progressively builds on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. A thorough review of the curriculum has been undertaken and revised schemes of work have been introduced. Pupils say that they find these interesting and enjoyable.
- The curriculum has several strengths. Pupils have a good range of fieldwork opportunities. Frequent use of the extensive school grounds and the award-winning environmental area coupled with visits to the local canal and stream support the curriculum well. In addition, outings to their locality and to places further afield such as Shropshire enriches the curriculum and extend pupils' first-hand experience of the themes they are studying. Pupils speak very positively about these visits as well as their residential experiences.
- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of environmental issues and of other countries such as Jamaica, the Gambia and Australia. Community cohesion is also developed well.
- Links with other subjects such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are well established. Frequent opportunities are provided to develop and extend pupils' writing, mathematical and ICT skills. Speaking and listening opportunities are also well used.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- Although the subject leader has only been in post for a term, the work undertaken by the senior leadership team before her appointment has provided a secure foundation for improvement.
- Monitoring and evaluation are routine. Work and planning scrutinies, classroom observation and discussion with pupils enable leaders to have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is also actively involved in evaluating the work of the school.
- School development planning is accurate and provides a clear steer for further improvement. Policies and schemes of work are current and these ensure that pupils have a good range and balance of activity.
- Effective links have been made with the local secondary school to support learning. These links not only provide pupils with the opportunity to develop skills such as animation but help ensure a smooth transfer and transition. Good use has been made of external consultants to support the leadership of the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further extending pupils' thinking by asking suitably challenging questions, particularly of the more able
- ensuring that all pupils know and understand their targets and through effective marking are clear about how these can be achieved

- increasing the use of Ordnance Survey maps at different scales, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 2.

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 Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector