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Mrs J Elvy
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Elvy

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 9 February 2012 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 one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of geography is inadequate.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is inadequate.

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world is fragmented and limited.
- Pupils acquire some basic map-reading skills and can use coordinates with some confidence to identify locations on Ordnance Survey maps. However, atlases are rarely used and locational knowledge is often insecure.
- Apart from the immediate locality, pupils' knowledge about places is weak and confused because they have insufficient opportunities to learn about contrasting places in depth. Even though they have completed some work on the Punjab, their learning focused on culture rather than the geography. Pupils looked at Indian food and clothes, made colourful table mats and learnt about rangoli patterns but were unable to locate the school or explain what the surrounding district was like.

- Pupils' use of specialist geographical vocabulary is weak because they have only superficial exposure to the subject. Even at Key Stage 2, when describing direction, up and down were used rather than north and south.
- There is limited development of key geographical concepts such as interdependence. Pupils' understanding of physical processes is also limited.
- There is no progressive development of fieldwork skills beyond basic observation.
- Pupils are well behaved and willing to learn and engage with the subject. They want to understand the world in which they live but are currently offered too few quality opportunities to do so.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is inadequate.

- Geography is not taught frequently enough or in a sufficiently cohesive manner to enable pupils to make consistent progress in their geographical learning.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils showed that learning was often low level; tasks did not challenge pupils, especially the more able. The lack of outcomes identified pace of learning to be slow.
- Teaching strategies do not make effective, or best, use of available resources both inside and outside the classroom. Poor-quality questioning and inappropriate activities result in a lack of clarity about what pupils are expected to achieve in lessons.
- Assessment is cursory and is not used effectively to help pupils improve or guide teacher's planning and next steps in learning. The geography studied was not explicit enough for pupils to be clear about the progress they were making.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is inadequate.

- Coverage of geographical content is superficial. There is insufficient study of places in sufficient depth to enable pupils to develop a good understanding of the world around them.
- The curriculum is fragmented, consisting of random groups of topics which do not ensure progression, especially in knowledge and understanding of places.
- Certain key aspects of the curriculum are not covered. Pupils are not sufficiently exposed to issues linked to the environment, the interdependence of places or physical processes. The European dimension is also absent.

- The school has tried to make some of the curriculum relevant through a more detailed study of the immediate locality and through the personal experience of teachers utilising the link with the Punjab. However, the lack of a clear underpinning rationale for subject development means that many geographical learning opportunities are missed.
- There is no clear programme of geographical fieldwork to ensure the progressive development of these key geographical skills.
- Opportunities to use geography to enhance literacy and pupils' social and cultural development are not utilised.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is inadequate.

- There is a lack of clear vision about what constitutes 'good' geography and what needs to be put in place to ensure appropriate provision. The subject has a low profile in the eyes of the pupils.
- Leadership is not well informed about current initiatives in the subject. Self-evaluation is not informed by a clear understanding of what constitutes good practice.
- There is a lack of understanding in how to ensure that gaps in provision are rectified. As a result, pupils are not receiving their full entitlement in the subject, including opportunities for outdoor learning.
- The resources and support provided by the subject associations have not been utilised to improve learning in the subject or to develop subject expertise.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a clearly structured scheme of work which ensures:
 - clear progression in geographical knowledge, understanding and skills
 - no gaps in coverage of the programmes of study
 - opportunities for learning outside the classroom are embedded into the teaching programme
 - teaching is focused, well paced and challenges all pupils
 - a clear context for learning in other subject areas, especially literacy
- utilising the resources and support provided by the subject associations to enhance subject expertise and improve learning for pupils.

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