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Mrs V Marsh-Ballard
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Marsh-Ballard

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 17 May 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 parts of eight lessons enabling parallel classes to be observed. Outdoor activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage were included.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- Children's awareness of the wider world develops very well in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they mostly reach age-related expectations. Children are given ample opportunities to explore a wide range of good-quality geographical activities. Their forest school experience helps them to gain confidence outdoors. Work with simple robots encourages an early understanding of directional instructions and information and communication technology.
- Key Stage 1 pupils also benefit from the environmental improvements in areas around the school. They are keen observers and understand how their school area contrasts with the seaside town of Weston-super-Mare. Field visits significantly enrich their experience. Their knowledge of distant places is enhanced by numerous enrichment opportunities.

- Key Stage 2 pupils reach and exceed the standards expected for their age. They develop good maps skills making confident use of knowledge gained in mathematics and through orienteering. Pupils understand how places are interrelated. They particularly enjoy the current work on the Olympics and finding out about the many countries who will be participating.
- The regular use of fieldwork allows older pupils to gain confidence in interviewing the public, observing the coastline (of Wales) and seeing themselves as future citizens who can have an impact on society. They make good use of their literacy skills to write very persuasive letters about local issues.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning about geography.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teaching of the subject is consistently good because staff have secure subject knowledge and understand how to deliver the content of the curriculum in a very engaging manner.
- Lessons are well paced with crisp, clear and meaningful learning intentions. Pupils understand what they are expected to learn and are confident to alert staff if they are uncertain about anything being taught. Teachers appropriately check on pupils' progress and consistently use marking to give good feedback on what needs to improve.
- Modern technology is used exceptionally well to explain difficult concepts; such as six-figure grid references. Staff are adept at drawing pupils' attention to key vocabulary and concepts.
- Expectations are generally high, including exactly what pupils will learn from their fieldwork and residential experiences. Occasionally, in a few lessons, potentially higher ability pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- Outstanding teaching is modelled by both a geography graduate in the upper school and the current geography coordinator who teaches the youngest children.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The curriculum has recently been rigorously audited and some gaps in pupils' skills were identified. As a result, the curriculum has been revised and now ensures a better progression of skills.
- Creative topics have been retained. However, these are now more closely monitored to see that all aspects of the programmes of study are fully covered.
- Field experiences offer quality, breadth and variety leading to pupils' good grasp of both human impact and physical processes on the landscape.

- Good links are made with the school's travel and eco-policy but pupils' awareness of other aspects of sustainability is only average.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- The subject is effectively managed by the new coordinator. A clear action plan arose from good self-evaluation and evidence of progress in addressing the identified issues is clear.
- Staff demonstrated that they access and use up-to-date materials and subject knowledge to deliver informative lively lessons. Further, professional development on skills assessment is planned; this is acknowledged to be a relative weakness at present.
- A useful start has been made on a school portfolio of subject-related evidence although this is not yet sufficiently linked to the level descriptors in the national guidance for the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- refining the use of assessment of pupils' skills to ensure maximum challenge in all lessons, especially for potentially higher attaining pupils
- encouraging greater use of geography in the news and related topical events to further extend pupils' curiosity about contemporary issues linked to sustainability.

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

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector