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13 June 2012

Mrs J Ames
Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ames

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 24 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- Children gain a good understanding of geographical concepts in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress and almost all reach or exceed age-related expectations by the end of the Reception Year.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils build on these skills by studying a wide range of geographical concepts which are taught through whole-school topics. Key Stage 2 pupils become keen geographers who are able to investigate a range of enquiry questions. This is because curriculum planning is focused on the posing of challenging questions which stimulate pupils' learning.
- When pupils leave school in Year 6 they have a broad knowledge and developed skills and understanding of geographical study. Almost all pupils are at or above the national level in their skills and understanding in the subject.

- Pupils' achievements are well supported by the many links with schools in other countries for example, Brazil, Senegal, Tanzania, Pakistan and Spain. These links support pupils' good knowledge of places and locations.
- Pupils enjoy geography. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'I enjoy learning about the world and what happens.' Another stated, 'I like to see how other people live. I like to see the culture of different countries.'

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teaching of geography is enquiry based. Teachers develop pupils' interest and curiosity because teaching is well structured and engaging. Good use is made of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT) and geographical information systems (GIS.) This approach to teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Activities are well prepared. They are fun and active learning is evident. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 used a range of evidence sources, including maps, aerial photographs, statistics and satellite images to decide where a family should locate their new home.
- Classroom environments have a geographical stimulus and give geography a high profile across the school. Interactive resources and interactive displays bring learning to life and promote an interest in the subject.
- Marking of pupils' work identifies what they have achieved and their successes are celebrated. However, little guidance is given on how to improve their geographical knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Learning is given a purpose and relevance, for example, Year 2 pupils visited 'The Common' to discover plants and animals living there. They looked at what would be destroyed if a supermarket located there. Pupils created tally and bar charts to record what they had found. Cross-curricular links in this lesson were highly effective and pupils' learning was enhanced by developing activities that stimulated pupils' thinking. As one pupil said, 'We don't want a supermarket here!'

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is outstanding.

- The school has developed a creative skills-based curriculum on which to base its geography. It has adapted curriculum plans to meet pupils' needs exceptionally well and is linked to a local context. It is designed to ensure coverage of all the programmes of study. Whole-school topics are covered for example, 'The Big Wide World!' This examined geographical enquiry and skills, knowledge and understanding of places, knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development.
- Geographical skills are incorporated into all topics. Topics ensure good breadth of knowledge and understanding. Links between subjects are very well established. Frequent opportunities are provided to develop and extend pupils' writing, mathematical and ICT skills.

- Fieldwork is a regular part of the school's provision. It is very well integrated into topics and provides effective support to enhance learning. Map work is taught on a regular basis. This results in pupils' good understanding of the location of places. They use GIS and a wide range of maps of varying scales and locations.
- Plans for the curriculum are very well thought out and continually re-evaluated. Each topic undergoes a separate review. This is an indication of the drive and ambition to enhance pupils' learning further.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- The effectiveness of geography is well evaluated to ensure its success. Lessons are monitored and pupil voice is used as a valuable source of evidence. Pupils' work is moderated to ensure that teachers make accurate judgements. Rigorous monitoring makes sure pupils make good progress in all aspects of geographical knowledge, skills and understanding.
- An action plan is in place which identifies how to improve geography and leaders have a clear view of how the subject is developing. They know the strengths and weaknesses. Formal documentation, however, to evidence self-evaluation is less effective.
- The school has good links with the local secondary and primary schools. This includes the Schools Linking Project, where pupils in Key Stage 2 visit landmarks and each other's schools in contrasting localities across Stockport. They look at similarities and differences in environments, homes and local amenities.
- The school successfully completed three years of Global Curriculum Project funding as part of the good practice global school partnership. This invests in collaboration across cultures, curriculum development and continuing professional development for teachers and has proved beneficial in supporting learning in geography.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing day-to-day marking of pupils' work so that they are more aware of how to improve
- further developing self evaluation in geography.

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

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector