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Mrs G Jones  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Jones

### **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 9 July 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 five lessons including work in the school's forest area.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

#### **Achievement in geography**

Achievement in geography is satisfactory.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to finding out about the world around them due to well-planned provision and their access to high-quality field experiences, including through the forest school programme. They progress well from their starting points which are, in many cases, below those expected for their age. By the time they start in Year 1 they have reached average expectations.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sound understanding of plan view and basic map skills such as using keys on simple maps. They make the most of the extensive school grounds and can successfully identify areas for enhancement as well as areas they appreciate.
- Geography provides an appropriate context to support the development of literacy and reasoning skills. However, pupils' responses are sometimes

restricted by over-prescriptive use of formats, including writing frames. Numeracy skills are less well developed through geography.

- In Key Stage 2, pupils make steady progress in their understanding of geographical concepts such as population, weather and both physical and human aspects of geography. They are confident users of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Throughout Key Stage 2, their understanding of the environment, sustainability and places around the world develops well. This includes places in Europe. They benefit from frequent opportunities to visit other European countries, including most recently Italy. In alternate years, they have a residential experience in France which helps them understand another culture.
- Pupils' understanding of less-developed countries is well supported through international links. However, pupils still tend to see more differences than similarities in human needs across the world leading to stereotypical rather than informed judgements being made. For example, pupils understand about the variety of cultures within the United Kingdom but a minority hold rather stereotypical views about some groups such as recent migrants.
- In the final year, pupils' transition to secondary school is well supported by the local secondary school's humanities transition programme. Pupils reach the expected national level and are appropriately positioned to build on this as they move to the next stage of education.
- Pupils develop good team-working skills. Group work is lively and well structured; this, together with good resources and good first-hand field experiences, encourages pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject. Behaviour in lessons is good.

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

The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory.

- Teaching is consistently satisfactory and some is good. The good lessons challenge pupils to tackle hard concepts such as altitude and time zones.
- Lessons involve active and lively learning and build appropriately on the national programmes of study and the pupils' own interests. Staff use assessment well to gauge how learning is progressing within each session.
- Occasionally in lessons, the lack of open-ended tasks limits learning, especially for the more able pupils.
- Staff, across the whole school, look for special opportunities, such as those associated with the visit to Italy, to broaden the pupils' cultural and geographical awareness. Active discussions explore what pupils have seen and experienced.
- Due to effective class management, pupils work reasonably well collaboratively, especially when involved together on investigative tasks.

- Teachers mark the pupils' work conscientiously so their learning is celebrated. However, their next steps in learning are less clear. As a result, they lack clear guidance on what they need to do next to improve.
- Pupils have not been empowered to challenge others if, for example, a classmate demonstrates unacceptable or negative stereotypical views.
- Creative approaches are encouraged. For example, one class produced its own 'BBC News desk' with reports from around the globe that pupils had researched in pairs. This stimulated interest and was highly enjoyable.

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

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- Thorough work has been done recently to ensure that the school curriculum covers all aspects of the programme of study and really involves and interests the pupils. This has led to good investigative topics linked to some of the countries represented at the London Olympics.
- Fieldwork is regularly planned and undertaken and pupils gain a variety of appropriate skills. For example, good field sketches were produced on their trip to London. Teachers provide good experiences to extend their knowledge of the United Kingdom as a whole through visits to a seaside town, a large London primary school and Cardiff to observe urban life.
- The links with schools in East Africa provide pupils with insights into problems with economically developing countries and issues linked to a lack of rainfall. This challenged pupils' thinking about the recent floods in the United Kingdom. Pupils are also encouraged to link topics such as their historical work on the Egyptians with events like the annual flooding of the lower Nile valley.
- The curriculum is flexible and if a significant geographical event occurs pupils' are keen to help with emergency responses. They have begun to understand the concept of interdependency.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- The subject leader has kept a watchful eye on the balance of provision within the topic planning. She and other senior leaders effectively monitor pupils' work and the quality of lesson planning and delivery.
- Assessments are regular and show pupils making the expected levels of progress even though the main school focus has been on developing achievement in the core subjects. The historic effects of weaker teaching are being redressed.
- Governors take an interest in the subject and, for example, fully support the range of international visits. Currently, however, they are less actively involved in monitoring the subject.
- Resources are sufficient. The tight budget has restricted the amount of direct professional development that leaders have had in the subject. Staff

development has mostly been on the wider issues related to pupils' overall learning skills, although a productive session was provided on skill development in the subject.

- Leaders have ensured that teachers are confident in using ICT but have yet to fully exploit some aspects, such as geographical information systems, beyond Google Earth.
- The school does not currently belong to any of the subject associations; although it keeps up to date in general terms via their free website material.

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

- using the support and resources provided by the subject associations to keep more fully up to date with issues in the subject, including the use of geographical information systems
- ensuring that opportunities to develop numeracy through the subject are maximised
- empowering pupils to challenge any negative or unacceptable stereotyping.

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.

Yours sincerely

**Mo Roberts**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**