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Jane Treharne
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Dear Mrs Treharne

Subject inspection of Merrow CofE Controlled Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 14 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. The findings do not change the overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding from the last section 5 inspection.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for a no formal designation inspection of schools. The inspection was carried out to enable Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to better understand the quality of education in specific subjects provided by outstanding primary schools.

Main findings

You and your staff have reviewed the geography curriculum, putting pupils and their needs at the heart of this work. Plans are ambitious and closely aligned with the national curriculum. This planning ensures that all staff share a clear understanding of what geographical knowledge pupils should possess and understand at each point during their infant education.

Series of lessons are ordered so that they overlap, then build upon, pupils' prior learning. Much of the geographical curriculum is well established. For example, leaders and staff have ensured that younger children and pupils understand and can identify the features and characteristics of the local area before they begin to consider the world around them.

Pupils learn to think like geographers. Teachers ensure that pupils consistently compare localities, looking for the differences between places, both locally and abroad. Pupils are adept at explaining how climate, landscapes and economies differ between places. On occasion, case studies focus too strongly on differences without recognising similarities between settings. This means that some pupils develop misconceptions about the people and places they have studied.

Children and pupils revisit key concepts as they move through the school, helping to build and embed their knowledge over time. For example, children learn about the weather in Reception and discuss what clothes are best to wear in different conditions. In Year 1, pupils measure temperature, wind speed and rainfall and consider the protection they may need from the sun and extreme cold. In Year 2, pupils start to look at the link between weather and climate. They consider how this affects the economy, land use and lifestyle of local people and how weather shapes the earth in different ways. Pupils' understanding of geographical concepts is developed well and helps pupils to discuss and explain their thinking with precision and accuracy.

Pupils remember most of the information they are taught because staff regularly require them to refer to it. For example, pupils in Year 2 easily recalled the countries and capital cities of the United Kingdom because they had revised this when comparing England with Kenya. Some learning is not revised often enough. When this is the case, pupils forget key information such as the names of major oceans.

In Reception, staff carefully consider the knowledge that children already have, to ensure that children quickly develop a sense of place in their local area. They teach children to identify and understand the common features of maps and how they relate to real life. For example, children looked at pictures of their walk to school and placed these in order. Children's secure understanding of their immediate surroundings provides them with an excellent foundation when learning about the rest of the world.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well to achieve their goals in geography. All pupils attend field trips and visits, regardless of their needs. Appropriate adaptations are used in class to remove unnecessary writing or administrative requirements. For example, pupils with SEND were given labels to mark places on a map rather than writing out the words. Such modifications allow pupils with SEND to make the most of their geography learning and to keep up with their peers.

Staff are supported well by senior and subject leaders. You have sought out meaningful partnerships with local schools to help share ideas and challenge leaders' thinking. Much of this work is in its infancy but is already showing early promise. For example, the curriculum has been adapted specifically to prepare pupils for the curriculum they will follow at the local junior school.

Evidence

During this visit I met with you, senior leaders, the subject leader for geography, the chair of governors and a group of teachers. I visited six lessons in the early years and key stage 1. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their learning in geography. I evaluated work in pupils' books and scrutinised curriculum planning.

Context

Merrow CofE Controlled Infant School is an average-sized infant school. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged or with SEND is below the national average. Nearly all pupils join the school at the start of the early years and stay until the end of Year 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Guildford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector