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Mr Joseph Figg
Executive headteacher
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Dear Mr Figg

Subject inspection of Purleigh Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 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 place considerable emphasis on the importance of geography within the school's curriculum. You are part of the way through reshaping how learning in geography is planned and taught so that there is greater emphasis on what content and geographical skills pupils will learn, and that there is more coherence to how the human and physical aspects of geography are planned and delivered.

Your new plans outline clearly what pupils will study, including the important geographical strands of place and locational knowledge and of human and physical geography. There is a greater emphasis given to pupils' knowledge and understanding of key geographical vocabulary. Nevertheless, in its current form, the curriculum does not include sufficient fieldwork opportunities for pupils to develop skills of observation, measurement, recording and presentation.

Aspects of the curriculum organisation are new and, at this point in time, teachers do not share an equally clear understanding of its endpoints for some geographical aspects. This is particularly the case in making sure that pupils deepen their understanding of the interaction between physical and human geographical processes. Thus, there is more to be done to ensure that your ambitious plans are effectively and consistently implemented. That said, children in the early years are being well prepared for Year 1. This is because leaders have designed a curriculum rich with activities that enable children to learn about their immediate surroundings, basic map work, and the traditions and experiences of people in different parts of the world.

Teachers use their detailed understanding of place and locational knowledge and of mapwork to present information clearly. They choose activities and resources that interest and enthuse pupils. Teachers promote discussion in which pupils keenly demonstrate their knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject, for example in exploring issues about the climate in North America or when comparing the locations and features of London and Beijing. Teachers also check that pupils know and understand what they are learning. This helps teachers to amend their teaching so that pupils know and understand more. This strong practice is not yet clearly evident in pupils' studies of human geography.

You are making sure that the curriculum remains accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy their geography lessons and are keen, inquisitive learners. Pupils are encouraged to ask pertinent questions about the geographical resources that they are provided with. As a result, pupils are confident in using resources such as photographs, maps, atlases and globes to identify important global and local locations and to explore their characteristics. You are rightly keeping the curriculum under review so that you ensure there are sufficient opportunities to explore their understanding of the interaction between human and physical processes.

You make sure that pupils take part in visits within their immediate locality and to nearby towns and cities. Pupils also have the opportunity to travel further afield. However, there are few visits that have a specific geographical focus. More needs to be done to ensure that teachers use fieldwork visits to help pupils to develop their familiarity with, and effectiveness in, observing, measuring, recording and presenting their findings.

Evidence

During this inspection, I evaluated the school's curriculum plans, and, in particular, those relating to the subject of geography. I met with you and other members of the school's senior team. I also met with the subject leader for geography and for early years. I met with two groups of teachers and one group of pupils. I visited lessons and evaluated work in pupils' books.

Context

Purleigh Community Primary School is a smaller-than-average sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged or pupils with SEND is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is considerably lower than the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas

Her Majesty's Inspector