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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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7 February 2020

Mr Jamie White
Headteacher
Oulton Broad Primary School
Christmas Lane
Oulton Broad
Lowestoft
NR32 3JX

Dear Mr White

Subject inspection of Oulton Broad Primary School

Following my visit with to your school on Friday 17 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 previous 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

Over the last 18 months, leaders have taken a 'root and branch' approach to reviewing and restructuring all foundation subjects, including geography, to establish a more coherent curriculum. Unusually, this has been undertaken without any nominated subject leaders. Instead, all teachers have collaborated in co-producing a coherent curriculum for each subject, based on a collectively agreed understanding of what pupils will know and be able to do by the age of five, seven, nine and 11. Each phase of geography teaching is scaffolded by carefully considered concepts, experiences and key vocabulary. Teachers then take a proportionate approach to short-term planning and assessment, without the need for burdensome testing or any prescriptive planning requirements.

The immediate benefit of this approach is that teachers in every class know where pupils should be on their subject journey and what they need to know to achieve well in the longer term. Within the agreed framework, teachers have the flexibility to plan learning and decide how best to teach it. For geography, this ensures that

the subject is well founded and carefully sequenced, with each year of study building progressively on what has gone before, in breadth, depth and complexity.

The curriculum is suitably ambitious for all pupils in each year group. Being involved in shaping the curriculum for pupils of different ages ensures that class teachers are able to link the content being studied to that which pupils have learned in previous years and need to know for their future learning. Knowing this, and through their assessments, teachers are quick to spot any gaps in pupils' knowledge and address misconceptions. They routinely check pupils' prior learning. This not only happens in geography lessons, but also when teaching linked topics in subjects such as history and science that directly or incidentally cover aspects of geography. The geography curriculum is as dynamic as the nearby beaches that pupils visit to study coastal processes. Topics are routinely kept under review, so that teaching is adjusted and subject matter is tweaked, or even replaced, when teachers reflect on what they have taught and assess pupils' progress. This approach is effective in making sure that all pupils, including those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, can access the curriculum.

Teachers are successful in giving pupils a love of geography. Teaching sparks children's curiosity from the moment they start in the nursery. They develop a fascination for the world they live in and, over time, begin to understand the role that they can play in shaping it. The youngest children learn about polar regions, investigate mini icebergs melting and make crystals like the snowflakes in 'The Polar Bear and the Snow Cloud'. Pupils are encouraged to recycle from an early age. In key stage 1 and key stage 2, teachers take a similar approach in selecting topics that promote pupils' curiosity and wider knowledge and understanding. 'Lights, camera, action' in Year 6, for example, compares the film industry in Hollywood and Bollywood, and the human and physical factors that influenced its development.

Maps are at the heart of geography. Their use, interpretation and construction are developed from an early age. In Reception, teachers introduce the children to the concept of locality and scale using technology to locate their place on Earth. Teaching makes good use of the surrounding environment and neighbourhood to widen children's horizons. Pupils' conceptual understanding of maps and location is systematically developed and deepened as they move up through the school. Classrooms have globes, maps and atlases that pupils refer to, and even add information; older pupils use the computer to locate unfamiliar places. Over time, pupils consequently build a wide frame of reference and a secure knowledge of significant features and places, locally and globally. Teachers regularly check pupils' knowledge and promote locational decision-making. In a history lesson, for example, key stage 1 pupils studying the development of motte and bailey castles could identify patterns in the locations of the sites of Norman castles on a map of the United Kingdom. They had to note which parts of the country each was located in, describe the situation of a castle using an Ordnance Survey map, and then make locational decisions about the best site for their motte and bailey on a large 3-D landscape model.

Teachers make good use of the local environment, including visits to the local marshes and beach, to widen pupils' knowledge and develop their skills in observation and in data collection and processing. However, leaders recognise that fieldwork could be planned more systematically and with more ambitious intent and have already taken steps to review this.

Evidence

During my visit, I spoke with you and your deputy headteacher. I interviewed four class teachers from each phase of the school, including the early years leader. I looked at the school's whole-school curriculum planning and specific documentation for geography. We visited lessons across every class in the school and scrutinised pupils' geography work. I spoke informally to pupils in their classrooms and held a detailed discussion with a group of pupils from key stage 2.

Context

The school has expanded steadily in recent years, and currently has 321 pupils on roll, slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. Leaders have been resourceful in addressing the local challenge of teacher recruitment and retention in order to develop the highest quality of staff. A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans is also in line with the national figure, although there are comparatively few pupils on the school's special educational needs register.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector