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Ruth Ryan
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Dear Mrs Ryan

Subject inspection of Shepherdswell Academy

Following my visit to your school on 26 February 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

Leaders and trust officers have developed a clear and ambitious vision for what pupils will learn in geography. They have worked with the trust's subject specialists and teaching staff to plan and sequence the curriculum in an appropriate way. Staff teach series of lessons that help pupils to learn key geographical concepts and skills, such as fieldwork and locality comparison. The opportunity for pupils to study the local canals, rivers and urban areas first hand is a key strength. This gives pupils, many of whom are new arrivals to the country, a good understanding of their locality. This ensures that all pupils, including new arrivals, have a useful point of reference before comparing with other places.

Staff in school have received useful training to help them deliver the curriculum. They are skilled at designing activities that help pupils to recall their knowledge. For example, pupils in Year 2 consider how humans have damaged the planet by recalling their knowledge of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. However, plans do not always direct staff to teach pupils about specific localities. This means that

some content and case studies used do not always ensure that pupils are able to meet the trust's defined curriculum goals. Sometimes, pupils do not consider full and accurate case studies, which leads to them having misconceptions about the people and places.

Staff carefully plan series of lessons that help pupils to deepen their understanding of geographical concepts. For example, pupils in Year 1 learn about maps by sketching objects from an aerial perspective. They then created simple plans of their classroom and finally plotted more complex plans of the school using appropriate symbols and including a key. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also benefit from this approach. The curriculum is designed to ensure that these pupils can access most activities and appropriate adaptations are made when this is not the case. Additional support is provided for any pupils, including those with SEND, who need help, meaning few pupils fall behind in geography.

Children in the early years learn to understand the changing seasons and are adept at listening to, and using, positional language. For example, children understood that, despite the bright sunshine, the weather remained cold because it is still winter. The early years curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that children's understanding of the world prepares them to study geography in the future. However, systems for assessment children's achievements and learning do not allow staff to easily gain an overview of what content has been covered and learned. This means that gaps in children's understanding about the world cannot easily be identified and addressed.

Evidence

During this inspection I met with you, senior leaders, the subject leader for geography and a group of teachers. On the day of the inspection, geography was not being taught in Years 1 and 2. I scrutinised curriculum planning and I visited two lessons in the early years. I met with pupils in all year groups to talk about their learning in geography and evaluated work in pupils' books and in electronic journals.

Context

Shepherdswell Academy is a smaller than average-sized infant school. It is part of the East Midlands Academy Trust. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged or with SEND is above the national average.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Milton Keynes. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector