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Mr I Potter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Potter

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20-21 September to look at work in geography.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the global dimension 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall although in some teaching groups at GCSE achievement is inadequate. Standards at Advanced level are above average.
- Behaviour in lessons observed was always good and often excellent due to high expectations by teachers who rigorously implemented their procedures for managing behaviour. Overall pupils' personal development is good.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in geography is satisfactory.

- In good lessons, all pupils were involved in a variety of challenging learning activities which enabled them to make good progress. These lessons were well planned, taught at a good pace and provided opportunities for pupils to work independently of the teacher.
- Where teaching and learning were less effective, lesson planning did not provide adequately for pupils of different levels of ability. In particular more able pupils were insufficiently challenged. As a result their progress was limited.
- Assessment is not secure and does not always provide an accurate picture of how pupils are progressing.
- Marking is also inadequate as it does not always make clear how well pupils have done or how they can improve the quality of their work.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good overall.

- There is a broad and diverse range of topics which enthuses and interests the pupils.
- The field work programme is adequate and you are supportive of expanding this to further increase pupils' enjoyment of the subject.
- The use of ICT is currently limited.

Leadership and management of the subject

Leadership and management of geography have been unsatisfactory.

- There have been three different subject leaders in the last three years and the subject has lacked direction and rigorous management.
- The very recently appointed subject leader has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and is beginning to develop strategies for improvement.
- Schemes of work are adequate and the subject is generally well resourced.
- The subject continues to be popular with a much greater proportion of pupils opting for geography GCSE than nationally.

Subject issue: the global dimension

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is satisfactory overall.

- There is good provision through the curriculum for pupils to understand their place in the world and the links between physical and human systems.
- Understanding is more highly developed in sixth form students but less so in younger pupils, relative to their age.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory.

- Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in geography.
- In lessons observed teachers ensured that all pupils took part in the work although planned activities did not always stretch more able pupils fully.
- Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported by teacher assistants.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- ensure that assessment is consistent and accurate
- monitor pupils' attainment against targets more frequently and rigorously to identify areas of underachievement
- tackle underachievement by ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is of a consistently high standard, especially the provision for more able pupils.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop geography in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tom Winskill
Her Majesty's Inspector