

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



12 December 2006

Mrs D Slaght
Headteacher
Holy Rood Catholic Infant School
Groundwell Road
Swindon
SN1 2LU

Dear Mrs Slaght

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 December 2006 to look at work in geography.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of geography, the visit had a particular focus on the global dimension.

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, observation of two lessons and short visits to two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Standards are well above average and pupils in all years are able to demonstrate a high level of understanding across several aspects of the subject.
- Pupils make at least good progress and many make excellent progress as a result of the excellent curriculum provision, good teaching and high quality leadership of the subject.
- Some pupils who join the school with little or no understanding of English make outstanding progress and often achieve at or beyond national expectations in geography by the end of Year 2.

- Personal development and well being are excellent as pupils are interested and excited by many of the activities in geography. The subject makes good use of Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) school volunteers to make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features.

- Teaching is characterised by its clear geographical content and the development of the pupils' enquiry skills. Pupils are strongly encouraged to think for themselves.
- Pupils are involved in a good range of activities which interest them and enable them to work both individually and together in small groups. Some opportunities are missed to provide more challenging work for higher attaining small groups and individual pupils within broad ability groupings.
- Teaching is inclusive and successfully integrates pupils whose first language is not English through well planned activities, good questioning and highly effective support by teaching assistants.
- Outstanding teaching in the Foundation Stage held pupils enthralled with exciting stimulus material. This was followed up by a wide range of well designed activities which maintained the children's concentration and interest. As a result their learning was consolidated, developed and extended so that many made excellent progress.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- There is an excellent whole-school approach to curriculum planning which ensures pupils develop good and, at times, impressive knowledge, skills and understanding in geography as they move through the school.
- The curriculum is based on a framework of geographical skills and effectively incorporates opportunities for pupils to collect, describe and analyse information in different ways in order to answer geographical questions.
- Curriculum activities are stimulating and commercial materials are well adapted to meet the pupils' needs. Good use of globes, atlases, maps and plans features strongly in all years. Well planned fieldwork provides pupils with an excellent understanding of their local area.
- Links with other curriculum areas are well drawn out. The school makes good use of visitors, including a polar explorer, to enhance and extend its curriculum provision effectively.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The subject leader's specialist knowledge has enabled her to provide a well planned programme based on sound geographical principles.
- Subject planning is excellent and, together with effective moderation of pupils' assessed work, provides a strong framework for guiding the teaching of geography though out the school.
- The capacity for further improvement is good as the curriculum has improved since the last inspection in 2003 and high standards have been maintained. A new coordinator will take on the role from January 2007 as part of a planned reorganisation. The school is working to ensure the transition to the new subject leader will enable the subject to continue to perform highly.
- You support the subject well through your belief in the educational value of the subject and the good resources provided.

Subject issue

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is good.

- Pupils' understanding of how people live in different places is good as a result of the curriculum and also geographical perspectives drawn out from activities such as the visits of the CAFOD school volunteers.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- Almost all pupils make good progress and some, including some pupils whose first language is not English, make excellent progress as a result of highly inclusive approaches in the classroom.
- Some of the most able are not always sufficiently challenged.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- sharpen the match of activities to the needs of individual pupils more effectively, particularly those who are more able.

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