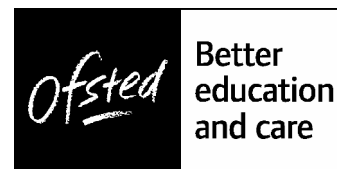


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Mr S Drake  
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Dear Mr Drake

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 and 11 January 2007 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards, as shown by results at Advanced level, GCSE and Key Stage 3 teacher assessments, are below average. Results at GCSE have improved from 2005 as a result of improvements in teaching and learning as well as more rigorous preparation for examinations. Standards achieved so far in the current Year 11 show further improvement.

- Overall, however, some middle ability and more able pupils make less progress than they could.
- In lessons seen all pupils made at least satisfactory progress and many made good progress.
- Behaviour in lessons was excellent as a result of clear, consistently applied expectations.

### Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Much of the teaching seen was good and none was inadequate. All lessons were well planned, underpinned by good subject knowledge and strong positive relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result all pupils made at least satisfactory progress.
- Good teaching was characterised by good pace and range of activities which challenged, enthused and interested the pupils. Less effective teaching did not challenge some higher ability pupils sufficiently to enable them to achieve as highly as they could.
- Teaching is beginning to take more account of the needs of different pupils and planning is being increasingly informed by pupil targets, data on ability and prior attainment. This is an improvement from the last inspection but has yet to be fully developed.
- Assessment is satisfactory and pupils know how well they are doing, know their targets and what they have to do to achieve or exceed those targets. Marking is regular, frequent and helpful to pupils although the quality of marking is inconsistent.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum provides a good range of topics at different scales from different parts of the world and is under continual review.
- The field work programme is improving and there is now provision in all key stages although not in all year groups. Pupils enjoy fieldwork and see the benefits it brings to improving their understanding.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is limited. Pupils use the internet at home or in school for research but the regular use of ICT to enhance learning is infrequent and inconsistent.
- There are insufficient curriculum activities to ensure that more able pupils are given the opportunity to work at higher levels regularly and frequently. This constrains their opportunities to develop the confidence to think more deeply for themselves and does not lead to secure understanding of some geographical concepts.
- Well structured curriculum materials ensure all pupils can access the curriculum.

- The use of maps is well established through all key stages, an improvement since the last inspection.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- Subject teachers work well as a team, planning together and sharing good practice.
- Schemes of work are adequate but do not make clear the different provision for groups of pupils with differing aptitudes and abilities.
- The subject takes part in a well organised programme of self evaluation and development planning procedures within the Humanities faculty. As a result the subject leader has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses and is developing strategies to tackle these weaknesses. These have begun to bring about improvements in standards but have yet to be embedded and sustained.
- The capacity for improvement is good and is demonstrated by clear and appropriate action plans for improvement, initial steps in raising standards and the improving quality of teaching.
- Performance management procedures are sound but feedback on lesson observations does not place sufficient emphasis on pupils' progress and learning.

## Subject issue: the global dimension

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is good.

- The curriculum enables pupils to understand a range of issues at different scales and as a result pupils' understanding of the world around them is greatly enhanced.
- The department actively fosters the development of pupils' well informed, personal views on issues such as global warming, fair trade, development and unequal wealth.

## Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is satisfactory.

- Pupils are treated fairly in geography. They value the rewards available and understand why sanctions are sometimes applied.
- Curriculum planning, supportive teaching and effective teaching support ensure that pupils with learning difficulties or those at the lower end of the ability range make satisfactory and often good progress.
- Curriculum planning does not always enable more able pupils to achieve to their full potential.

## Areas for improvement

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

- ensure lesson planning takes into account fully the needs of all pupils and focuses on how all groups will learn
- ensure that curriculum materials and schemes of work provide sufficient opportunity for pupils of middle and upper ability to develop their understanding of the subject fully so that they can approach formal tests and examinations with greater confidence.

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