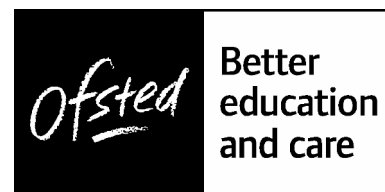


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29 November 2006

Ms R Olivier
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Dear Ms Olivier

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 and 03 November 2006 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 emphasis placed on the global dimension of the subject.

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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are significantly above the national average, particularly at Level 6 and above. Standards in GCSE have been above the national average for the last two years and in 2006, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades in geography at GCSE has increased. Significantly, over the last two years, there have

been no unclassified grades. Pupils of all abilities make good progress from Year 7 to Year 11.

- Standards in the sixth form are very good, with a high percentage of pupils achieving the highest grades of A and B. All pupils entered for Advanced Level GCE in geography in the last three years have gained a graded pass.
- Pupils are achieving well in geography lessons. They understand concepts well, are developing appropriate geographical skills and can apply their knowledge to new situations.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in geography are good overall with some outstanding features.

- Lessons are well planned, with considerable subject rigour and a good balance of opportunities for paired, group and whole class work. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good; this together with good pace in lessons, contributes to pupils' effective learning.
- Pupils respond well to their teachers; they are enthusiastic about their geography and learn particularly well where learning activities are lively and participatory in nature.
- Pupils reported that their geography teachers provide very good explanations and give good guidance as to what they need to do to improve their work. However, pupils do not always follow up the advice provided in their marked work. Pupils are very aware of the targets that they were working towards.
- Pupils have a good understanding of coastal processes studied whilst undertaking fieldwork at Birling Gap and Seaford. They had a clear grasp of the conservation strategies applied in response to coastal erosion.
- Assessment is regular and generally effective, except in Year 8 where assessment relies too heavily on factual recall.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Schemes of work reflect good subject progression from Year 7 to Year 11 and geographical skills are identified well. However, identification of the contribution made to citizenship and ICT are less evident.

- Although good fieldwork opportunities exist in Year 10 and in the sixth form, these are limited in Years 7 to 9.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- The subject is well led; this has led to improved standards recently.
- Appropriate action plans are in place to raise standards still further.
- There is a positive approach to the effective partnership between geography and science within the recently formed environmental and scientific area of learning.
- Good progress has been made since the last inspection with the purchase of new resources including fieldwork equipment.

Subject issue: global dimension

The quality of provision in this area is satisfactory.

- The schemes of work identify some aspects of global phenomena. There is scope for further development of this aspect of geography, such as the influence of multinational companies on the global economy.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- Pupils are effectively identified for additional support and good provision is made for pupils who are hearing impaired and those who are at an early stage of learning English.

Areas for improvement

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

- ensure that pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a significant and planned entitlement to fieldwork activities
- develop further the range of assessment activities, particularly for Year 8
- develop the important links between geography and science in the newly formed environmental and scientific understanding area of learning.

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

Jennifer Smith
H M Inspector of Schools