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Ms K Davidson
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Dear Ms Davidson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07 March 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 provision for 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 and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards are broadly average. Few pupils exceed national expectations because some topics are taught with insufficient geographical depth and rigour to enable pupils to achieve higher levels.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress through a well organised curriculum programme.

- Pupils' knowledge of the local area and the wider world is good. They are less secure on the geography of the British Isles. Their atlas skills are good.
- Pupils are interested in the subject. Those in Key Stage 1 enjoy it greatly although Key Stage 2 pupils are less enthusiastic.
- Pupils show good attitudes to their work and are able to work well independently and in groups without the direct supervision of the teacher.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching does not always provide effectively for pupils of different abilities. Too many pupils carry out the same tasks regardless of their ability or aptitude. As a result progress is satisfactory rather than good.
- Activities for older pupils include collecting irrelevant facts rather than developing and guiding their understanding of important geographical issues and processes.
- Good teaching observed had a range of different, interesting and engaging tasks which enabled almost all pupils to make good progress.
- Teaching assistants are effective when leading small groups and providing support for pupils with learning difficulties which helps them make satisfactory progress.
- The subject has recently introduced a new assessment system but it is too early to judge its effect on pupils' achievement.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum programmes, although still reliant on nationally published schemes of work, are well organised and provide opportunities for good progression through the school.
- Fieldwork is an integral part of the curriculum in each key stage.
- There are good links between geography and literacy, numeracy and, increasingly, information and communication technology.
- The subject makes good use of external speakers to enhance aspects of the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The recently reviewed geography policy provides a good overview of the aims and provision for the subject.
- Provision is well organised and the resources are good.

- You and your subject coordinator have a good overview of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. You recognise that the accurate assessment of pupils' standards of work and the monitoring and tracking of their progress in geography in Key Stages 1 and 2 is weak.
- An action plan to tackle these weaknesses has been drawn up. However, it does not include activities to allow teachers to develop a shared view of different National Curriculum levels nor for effective monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world in the Foundation stage is good.
- The subject coordinator has begun the welcome process of developing schemes of work which are less reliant on published materials. This is at a very early stage of development.

Subject issue: the global dimension

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is good.

- Pupils have a good awareness of other parts of the world through the geography curriculum. They are able to discuss issues of global concern such as 'fair trade' for poorer countries which is a geography topic in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils learn about issues such as water supply and disease control through their personal social health education programme and assemblies.
- The school is in the early stages of developing a link with a village in Kenya whose children have already visited the school.

Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is satisfactory.

- Planning for teaching and learning does not always take account of the needs and aptitudes of all pupils.
- Groups and individuals with learning difficulties are effectively supported in the classroom.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing procedures to ensure teachers have a shared, more accurate understanding of standards so that progress can be tracked effectively
- planning teaching and learning activities which better meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and aptitudes
- ensuring learning activities, particularly for older pupils, have sufficient geographical rigour.

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