

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr Chris Jones
Headteacher
Richard Whittington Primary School
Thornbera Gardens
Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire
CM23 3NP

Dear Mr Jones

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 February 2007 to look at work in geography.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the 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 and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- By the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils reach standards in line with national expectations.
- Pupils in both key stages make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of geography.

- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good knowledge of places they have studied and have developed rudimentary map skills. They are able to distinguish between human and physical features.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of a range of places and can write about them in some detail. They have a good understanding of certain physical processes, for example, the water cycle, and associated geographical vocabulary. They can apply geographical skills, such as mapping, well to their work. When studying geographical issues, pupils have a good grasp of the values held by different groups and understand the need for a balanced argument.
- Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy geography – they perceive geography as a serious subject but fun to learn.
- Often it is a low level of literacy skills that inhibits a minority of pupils from demonstrating what they know and can do in their written work.
- Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is exemplary.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers planned lessons effectively with clear learning objectives and a range of activities to support pupils' achievement of these.
- The planning, organisation of lessons and good teaching resulted in effective learning.
- Teachers demonstrated good up to date subject knowledge and an awareness of what made a high quality geographical resource.
- Lessons have a good range of opportunities for pupils to work individually and in a variety of groupings. There were enough occasions in lessons for pupils to take part in purposeful dialogue.
- Activities, in particular the use of ICT, helped bring the subject to life for the pupils and in Year 1/2 provided opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of wonder.
- Teaching assistants were well deployed in lessons, understood what their role was and supported individual pupils and groups well.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work in geography was frequent and of good quality. The use of written comments indicating how pupils could improve is the most effective approach to ensure progress.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The geography curriculum has good breadth and balance and there is sufficient time provided for its delivery.

- The subject leader is rightly promoting less reliance on published schemes of work and is encouraging staff to develop more relevant units of work.
- In Key Stage 2, good use has been made of external speakers and agencies to provide an input into the curriculum and this has helped bring certain themes to life for the pupils.
- There is good medium term planning in place across all year groups. This uses a common framework to ensure consistency of practice.

Leadership and management of geography

The leadership and management of geography are good.

- The subject leader has had a positive impact on improving geography in the school since the last inspection. The strengths and areas for improvement in geography are fully understood.
- There is an accurate self evaluation of geography that has helped inform the subject action plan. The action plan has a manageable range of developments required to bring about further improvement. The leadership capacity is in place to achieve these planned improvements.
- The monitoring and evaluation of geography is a strength. Observation of teaching and scrutiny of planning and pupils' work are used well to inform planning for future improvement.
- The focus on interviewing pupils about their perception of geography is in its infancy but is a good initiative.

Subject issue

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is good.

- There is an increasing sophistication in pupils' understanding of what it means to be a global citizen and the importance of sustainability, so that by Year 6 pupils know that local action can have global implications.
- There is a good focus in the geography curriculum on aspects of the global dimension and the study of places both local and distant.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is good overall.

- Medium term planning identifies the needs of different ability groups and suggests appropriate activities for each group.
- Teachers plan lessons with the needs of specific groups and individuals in mind. Suitable tasks are provided for different groups of pupils.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to support individual pupils so that they can access the full range of learning opportunities.

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

- ensure that there is progression built into the formal assessment programme across each key stage
- broaden the methods of assessment used
- consider, when planning for three different levels of ability, what differences in outcomes are expected.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Dowgill
Additional Inspector