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Dear Mrs Fisher

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 May 2007 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 focus on the emphasis placed on the global dimension of geography.

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 data, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards and achievement are satisfactory overall.

- By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils reach standards in line with national expectations. Most make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and understanding in geography.
- In reception, pupils explore some features of their local environment, are able to draw simple maps and know that people need to dress differently depending on weather conditions.

- At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of places they have studied. They are able to design maps, recognise some human and physical features in their locality, are aware though their study of Struay that the world extends beyond their locality and know that they can get to different places in different ways.
- This work is appropriately developed in Years 3 and 4. Visits into Skegness and to Gibraltar Point help pupils to investigate their local area and consolidate previously learned skills.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of work they have studied and can write about them in some detail. They are able to compare and contrast the two differing localities of Skegness and York. They can identify the features of rivers, waterfalls and deltas, using appropriate geographical vocabulary. They are able to present this work in interesting and creative ways using ICT to a good standard.
- Pupils generally are keen and enthusiastic about their work. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to clear classroom expectations of good behaviour.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features.

- Teachers plan lessons effectively with clear learning objectives which are made clear to pupils and recapped appropriately during lessons. This helps pupils to consolidate new learning. However, although enquiry skills are appropriately identified by most teachers in their planning, this is not yet consistent throughout the school.
- Lessons are well structured, with teachers using a variety of activities which are carefully selected to extend pupils' thinking.
- The response of pupils to ICT and visual resources is good. These help bring the subject to life for the greater majority.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to work in small groups, pairs and individually, ensuring access to a variety of learning techniques. Pupils respond well to these opportunities.
- Scrutiny of books shows that the higher attaining pupils often are not provided with additional challenge. This prevents them from making good progress.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance and there is sufficient time for its delivery. The school is relying less on published schemes of work and is developing more relevant units of work that are naturally linked to other subjects.

- Medium term plans are in place across all year groups. These use a common framework to ensure consistency of practice. Curriculum plans are appropriately evaluated by teachers. However, the outcomes are currently not summarised or passed on to the next teacher. Consequently pupils' skills are not always appropriately developed.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school, in Skegness, Gibraltar Point and York are highly appreciated and contribute greatly to the subject and pupils' learning.
- Interesting geography displays in classrooms help enhance the planned curriculum and are used appropriately by pupils to support their learning.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- There have been good improvements since the last inspection. A range of appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategies have ensured that the subject leader has a good understanding of the strengths in the subject and the areas which need further development.
- An accurate self evaluation has been used to produce an appropriate plan of action which incorporates a manageable range of developments required to bring about further improvement.
- Good support is provided by the governor with responsibility for the subject. Developments and progress have been appropriately shared with the curriculum committee as well as the full governing body.
- The subject leader has attended appropriate training and development opportunities in geography to inform herself about current issues in geography. Outcomes are shared appropriately with staff. She has identified, requested and purchased up to date resources.

Subject issue

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is good.

- There is a good focus in the curriculum on many aspects of the global dimension including the study of places both local and distant.
- Pupils are increasing their understanding of global issues through the study of themes such as traffic pollution, flooding and rainforests.
- 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. Links with 'Water-Aid' and 'Fair Trade' have helped increase pupils' awareness of the inter-dependence of countries and places.
- The school actively promotes recycling and this work has been supported by the use of an outside theatre group. Pupils enjoyed this activity very much and they could confidently retell the message of 'reduce, re-use and re-cycle'.

- Events such as the forthcoming 'Global Day' have further potential to increase pupils understanding of different countries and increase awareness of living in less economically developed countries.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory overall.

- Teachers plan lessons with the needs of specific groups and individuals in mind. Suitable tasks are provided for different groups of pupils although higher attaining pupils require further challenge in some of the tasks set to ensure they make better progress.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to support individuals or groups of pupils so that they can access the full range of learning opportunities.

Areas for improvement

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

- ensure that sufficient challenge is created for the higher attaining pupils
- devise a simple but effective method of sharing the assessments made by teachers to help receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills and increase rates of progress
- teachers should consistently identify key geography skills in their planning.

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 the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector