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Mrs J Brown  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Brown

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 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 pupils' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards and achievement are satisfactory overall.

- Standards on entry are broadly average although pupils come into Year 3 having undertaken a range of different geographical experiences in their feeder infant schools.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils reach standards that are in line with national expectations making steady gains in their learning.

- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have a satisfactory knowledge of geographical processes through their study of their immediate locality and the weather. Their geographical skills are developed satisfactorily through the study of plans and maps. Field work around Furzton Lake also supports this work appropriately.
- In Years 5 and 6, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in their skills, knowledge and understanding by comparing and contrasting Milton Keynes with Llandudno and Nairobi and their study of rivers. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound understanding of geographical processes at work through their study of mountain regions.
- Throughout the school opportunities are missed to build on pupils' previously developed skills. This is because the school does not have an accurate picture of what skills have been acquired.
- Overall, pupils' behaviour is good and they respond well to clear classroom expectations of good behaviour. Adults enjoy good relationships with pupils. Pupils generally are keen and enthusiastic about their work.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching was satisfactory with some good features.

- Work is well planned. All teachers make learning objectives clear to pupils and these are used well to recap on their learning during lessons. This helps pupils to consolidate new knowledge.
- In good observed lessons, resources were carefully selected to increase interest and add value to the session. These lessons had good pace, carefully building on previous learning to extend pupils' thinking.
- In lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, introductions tended to be over long and over- dominated by the teacher. Questioning is occasionally not precise or focused enough.
- Although Information and Communication Technology is generally used well, pupils sometimes are not critical or selective enough of the information they find. As a result, some become too reliant on the internet to provide solutions discouraging them from thinking for themselves.
- A range of assessment for learning techniques was observed. When used well, these effectively promote interest, collaboration and participation.
- Although all lessons observed were appropriately differentiated, scrutiny of books shows that more able pupils require less structure and greater challenge in order to make more rapid progress.
- Although pupils' work is marked regularly, guidance is not always sufficiently clear about what pupils need to do next to improve their geographical skills, knowledge and understanding.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is in the main appropriate and meets statutory requirements. However it is imbalanced, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The school is aware that the curriculum map for geography is in need of review.
- Some useful and interesting cross-curricular work has been undertaken particularly in a Year 4 history study of the Romans as well as a number of theme days such as the 'India Day' and 'Weather Day'. However, these sessions only provide limited opportunities to develop geographical thinking and understanding.
- Opportunities are not always taken to use field work and real examples within the immediate locality to motivate and inspire pupils. Where field work has been undertaken, as in Years 3 and 5 to Furzton Lake, pupils enjoy these visits and this helps support their learning.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- The current position in geography is very similar to that found at the time of the last inspection. The subject leader has undertaken some monitoring and evaluation of teachers' planning and pupils' work.
- The school does not have an accurate picture of the themes studied in the main feeder infant schools.
- The subject leader has produced an annual development plan which identifies appropriate areas for improvement. This provides a suitable starting point for future development.
- Good proposals are in place for the subject leader to develop the concept of sustainable development in collaboration with other colleagues.

## Subject issue

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is inadequate.

- There is insufficient emphasis on environmental change and sustainable development. Issues such as recycling, climate change and the effects of tourism on mountain regions have not been explored in sufficient detail. Pupils therefore do not have an adequate knowledge of global issues or fully understand their complexity.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory overall.

- In lessons seen work was matched to the needs of pupils, with boys and girls having equal access.
- Teachers provide appropriate support and challenge which helps pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties are generally well supported by learning support assistants.
- Where work is adapted, it is mainly to meet the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties. More able pupils require greater challenge in some of the tasks set.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups make satisfactory progress.

## Areas for improvement

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

- establish links with the two main feeder infant schools to increase the school's understanding of what has been taught previously and the geographical knowledge and skills that pupils bring with them on entry
- develop the curriculum further to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development
- establish a map which effectively tracks pupils' progress and which can be used by teachers to inform their planning to improve achievement, particularly for the most able
- review the geography curriculum map to ensure appropriate and balanced coverage
- ensure that monitoring and evaluation takes into account the views of pupils and includes some observations of lessons.

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