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Mrs M McCorry  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs McCorry

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 and 12 June 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards and achievement are good overall.

- Students join the school with standards that are broadly average. They come into Year 7 having undertaken a range of different geographical experiences in their feeder primary schools. By the end of Key Stage 4 their standards in geography are above average.
- Scrutiny of books shows that standards and progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Written work is of a satisfactory standard overall and is generally well presented but does not always demonstrate sufficient

evidence of independent enquiry. Teacher assessments are variable and in some cases because of over caution these are too low.

- Standards in Key Stage 4 are good. 71% grades achieved the GCSE pass rate of A\*-C in 2006. The majority of students met or exceeded their target. Most students make good progress in Key Stage 4. Coursework is of a good standard with most students providing clear explanations of geographical patterns and processes.
- Standards in the sixth form are good. The numbers opting for GCE/AS/A level have reduced in recent years because the subject has been blocked against popular subjects. Most pupils make good progress because the small numbers opting for geography allows for more personalised learning and individual attention.
- 'A' level standards in 2006 were good. 76% achieved A-C and 56% A-B in 2006. Students do less well in the Human geography component.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are good.

- Several examples of good teaching were observed. In these lessons, teaching was well planned and resources were carefully selected to increase interest and add value to the lesson. Lessons had good pace, carefully building on previous learning and extending pupils' thinking. A variety of appropriate activities engaged pupils and sustained their interest well.
- A range of assessment for learning techniques was observed. When used well, they effectively promoted interest, collaboration and participation. Skilful questioning required pupils to extend their thinking.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are generally good. Teachers enjoy good relationships with pupils. The most recent student survey of the subject reveals positive evaluations and high levels of student satisfaction.
- The department has made a sound start in developing a structure for assessing pupils' work. However, it is not yet rigorous enough. The department does not have a shared or consistent view of assessment in Key Stage 3. There is no agreed portfolio of evidence to support moderation.
- Most pupils' work is assessed at key times such as at the end of units and diagnostic feedback is given to students. Although pupils work is marked regularly, it does not always give clear enough guidance on what pupils need to do next to improve their geographical skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Homework is set appropriately and this helps to develop geographical themes and support learning.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. Schemes of work provide suitable coverage from local to global studies. However, the school knows that the curriculum at both Key Stage 3 and 4 is in need of refinement as it is in the main content driven and focused mainly on factual coverage.
- Fieldwork experiences to the Holderness Coast, Meadowhall and Malham Tarn contribute greatly to pupils' learning and are highly appreciated. However, opportunities are not always taken to use field work, real examples or the locality to motivate and inspire pupils.
- The school does not have an accurate picture of the themes studied in the main feeder primary schools.
- Some resources are outdated and in need of replacement. This was an issue at the time of the last inspection.
- Although ICT was used well by teachers to support learning, some timetable clashes restrict the access to ICT rooms for some groups of students and limit their opportunities to develop research and enquiry skills.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- The position identified at the time of the last inspection has been sustained. In addition, work has progressed in addressing areas for improvement identified in the report. There has been good implementation of the school's behaviour and teaching and learning policy.
- The recent self-evaluation of the department provides a useful starting point for future development. It summarises the work of the department accurately and pinpoints appropriate areas for development and the action needed to address them.
- Monitoring and evaluation strategies are being appropriately implemented. An increasing range of strategies such as work scrutiny, pupil surveys and data analysis is helping the department to accurately identify strengths and areas for development.
- The department has a clear understanding of some issues impacting on the subject. However, the department has not recently attended appropriate continuing professional development opportunities. This means that the department is not networking with local schools or keeping abreast of current developments.

## Subject issue

Pupils' learning about the global dimension is satisfactory.

- There is a good focus in the curriculum on many aspects of the global dimension such as 'Global Football', 'Global Fashion' and the study of Antarctica. These increase pupils' understanding of global issues.
- Pupils are beginning to confront issues such as how we relate to the environment and sustainability. They are also increasing their awareness of the complexity of the issues. The focus on 'Fair Trade' has helped increase pupils' awareness of the inter-dependence of countries and places.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good overall.

- All pupils are taught in mixed ability groups in Key Stage 3 and 4. There is often a wide range of ability in each class. In lessons seen work was matched to the needs of pupils with boys and girls having equal access.
- Teachers provided good support and challenge which helped pupils make satisfactory and often good progress. In lessons seen pupils with learning difficulties are generally well supported by learning support assistants.
- Where work was adapted, it was mainly to meet the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties. More able pupils require greater challenge in some of the tasks set.
- Where group sizes were smaller, teachers worked with pupils on an individual basis' and tailored the work to suit their needs. This increased rates of progress.

## Areas for improvement

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

- establish links with the main feeder primary 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
- update and increase the subject specific knowledge of the department by attending appropriate continuing professional development opportunities and disseminating good practice
- review the curriculum in the light of proposed national changes in order to construct a teaching programme which is both relevant, creative and focused on quality, practical experiences
- ensure assessments in Key Stage 3 are accurate and appropriately moderated.

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