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Mrs Billingham  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Billingham

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 27 September 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 planning and progression in 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 twelve parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards and achievement are good overall.

- From a low baseline, pupils reach standards in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average. Most pupils make good progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in geography.

- In reception, pupils explore some features of their local environment and learn about a different locality by visiting Chapman's Hill farm.
- 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 to Trentham Monkey Forest and Stratford butterfly farm help pupils to investigate beyond their local area and consolidate previously learned skills.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of work they have studied and can write about them in some detail. Work on tropical rainforests and Antarctica helps to compare and contrast differing localities and increase their understanding of global issues. They can identify the features of rivers using appropriate geographical vocabulary. They are able to present their work in interesting and creative ways.
- Pupils enjoy their geography work. They respond well to high expectations and interesting lessons, demonstrating good attitudes and behaviour.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers plan and structure their lessons well. They use a variety of activities which are carefully selected to extend pupils' thinking.
- Learning objectives are made clear to pupils and recapped appropriately during lessons. Plenaries are used to good effect. Together, these help pupils to increase and consolidate new learning.
- Pupils have access to a variety of learning techniques and they respond well to the good range of opportunities presented to them.
- Scrutiny of books shows that work appropriately meets the needs of pupils. Higher attaining pupils are provided with additional challenge which helps them make good progress.
- The response of pupils to ICT and visual resources is good. These help bring the subject to life for the greater majority.
- A new assessment programme had been implemented but this needs time to become established and evaluated. Marking is good and informs pupils well about how they can improve.

#### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance and there is sufficient time for its delivery. Good opportunities are provided to develop speaking and listening and writing skills. There are good cross-curricular links with other subjects, particularly English, history and science.

- Staff are increasingly integrating mapping skills into themes rather than teaching them in isolation. However further work is needed to develop this in other projects.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school and to Lapworth, Weston Super Mare and Dovedale are highly appreciated and these contribute greatly to the subject and pupils' learning.
- Geography displays are a riot of colour and information. They add interest and help enhance the planned curriculum by supporting pupils in their learning.
- There is a very good focus in the curriculum on many aspects of the global dimension. The school actively promotes recycling and pupils could confidently retell the message of 'reduce, re-use and re-cycle'.
- Links with 'Children's Eternal Rainforest' have helped increase pupils' awareness of the inter-dependence of countries and places.
- Events such as 'International Weeks' have increased pupils' understanding of different countries as well as their awareness of living in less economically developed countries.

#### Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- A range of appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategies ensure 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.
- Developments and progress have been appropriately shared with the senior leadership team and staff, 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.

#### Subject issue

Planning and progression in geography are good.

- Planning in the long and medium term ensures an appropriate range of geographical enquiry. 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.
- Increasingly, teachers are devising themes that ensure that key learning objectives are covered. This is leading to more interesting areas of study for pupils. At the same time, they are ensuring good progression of skills knowledge and understanding. However, further development work is needed to improve some established areas of study.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good overall.

- Teachers plan lessons with the needs of specific groups and individuals in mind. Boys and girls have equal access. Questioning is widely distributed and involves all pupils.
- In the lessons observed, well targeted differentiated activities and suitable tasks were provided for pupils with different learning needs.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to support individual 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:

- continue developing interesting themes which engage and stimulate pupils and link naturally to other subjects
- implement the method of sharing the assessments made by teachers to help receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills and further increase rates of progress
- integrate mapping skills into themes wherever appropriate.

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