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Mr Wood
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wood

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 08 October 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 seven parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both 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 skills, knowledge and understanding in geography.
- In reception, pupils have opportunities to participate in a range of activities based on first hand experience. They explore some features of their local environment by visiting Rugeley library and compare a different locality by visiting a local farm.

- At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of places they have studied. They are able to design simple maps, recognise some human and physical features in their locality by visiting Fernwood shops and Rugeley town centre. They know that they can get to different places in a variety of ways.
- This work is appropriately developed in Years 3 and 4. Field work is developed by further investigating their locality and considering some environmental issues. Pupils have an increased understanding of the British Isles coupled with an increasing knowledge of lives in other countries through their study of houses.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of work they have studied and when given the opportunity can write about them in some detail. They can identify the features of rivers and the water cycle using appropriate geographical vocabulary. They are able to compare and contrast differing localities with their work on Chembakolli, although some find it difficult to locate India on a world map.
- Pupils generally are keen and interested in their work. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to clear classroom expectations. Relationships between adults and pupils are good.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features.

- In the lessons observed, all had a brisk pace. They built on previous learning to extend pupils' thinking. Lessons were well structured, with teachers using a variety of activities which are carefully selected to extend pupils' thinking. However, pupils' work shows that this is not always the case.
- Work is planned thoroughly in year groups. Activities and resources are carefully selected to add interest to the lessons. Teachers make learning objectives clear to pupils and these are revisited during lessons to recap on learning. This helps pupils to consolidate new knowledge.
- Pupils are given some 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 work shows that much of the work set is similar for all pupils. Higher attaining pupils are often not always provided with additional challenge which prevents them from making better progress.
- Assessment is focused at the end of each unit but it is not used effectively to build on pupils' prior skills and increase rates of progress. Marking does not always inform pupils how they can improve.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. However, some themes are covered in insufficient depth in some classes and year groups. Consequently, this does not allow pupils to develop or extend their skills, knowledge and understanding beyond a satisfactory level.
- Pupils have an adequate knowledge of global issues but do not fully understand their complexity. Currently there is insufficient emphasis on environmental change and sustainable development. Issues such as recycling, climate change and the effects of industrial development in India have not been explored in sufficient detail.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school, in Rugeley, Etching Hill, and Chasewater are highly valued and contribute positively to the subject and pupils' learning. However, pupils' fieldwork skills are basic for their age. Opportunities are not always taken to use field work and real examples within the immediate locality to motivate and inspire pupils.
- ICT is generally used well to support pupils' learning. Good opportunities are provided to learn geography within other subjects. This enables pupils to reinforce and develop their geographical skills.
- Interesting geography displays in corridors help support and promote the planned curriculum.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- The subject leader is enthusiastic. She is increasing her understanding of the strengths in the subject and those areas which need further development.
- Recent self-evaluation has been used to produce an appropriate plan of action designed to bring about further improvement. Monitoring and evaluation of geography is at an early stage.
- Development of the subject has been limited. The subject policy is in need of review. Work to develop the geography curriculum has been delayed while other whole school priorities have been addressed.
- Insufficient use has been made of appropriate training or development opportunities in geography to inform teachers about current issues in the subject.

Subject issue

Planning and progression in geography is satisfactory.

- Planning in the long and medium term ensures an appropriate range of geographical enquiry leading to satisfactory progression throughout the school. However, schemes of work focus on coverage of content rather than teaching and learning specific skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Progression through school is inconsistent because previously developed skills are not always built on and extended well enough.

- The school is in the process of reviewing its curriculum. Whilst some good opportunities are provided for cross curricular work, more relevant units of work that are naturally linked to other subjects have not yet been developed and incorporated into the scheme of work.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory overall.

- In lessons seen, work was generally matched to the needs of most pupils, with boys and girls having equal access. Questioning was widely distributed with pupils appropriately involved.
- Teachers provide suitable support and challenge which helps the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress.
- Little adaptation of work was seen. Work was generally pitched towards the majority with some additional support for those pupils with learning difficulties. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged by some of the tasks set.

Areas for improvement

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

- review and update the geography policy
- review the curriculum and link subjects together where appropriate to make geography even more interesting, relevant and enjoyable for pupils
- develop the global dimension in other subjects in order to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding about issues affecting their environment
- develop assessment practices which effectively track pupils' progress and help receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills to increase rates of progress
- provide opportunities for the subject leader to attend appropriate continuing professional development courses and disseminate good practice.

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