

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Mitchell
Headteacher
Clifton Primary School
St Paul's Road
Balsall Heath
Birmingham
B12 8LY

Dear Mrs Mitchell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 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 two parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Both achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- Standards in line with national expectations. Most pupils develop satisfactory skills, knowledge and understanding in geography.
- In nursery and reception, pupils learn from participating in a range of practical activities. They make good use of the local area when visiting a farm and exploring Ladypool Road.

- At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have developed a satisfactory sense of place. They are able to compare and contrast different houses in their locality, recognise some human and physical features and are aware through their study of Jamaica and other places that the world extends beyond their locality.
- Mapwork and fieldwork skills are developed as pupils progress through Years 3 and 4. They also increase their understanding of environmental issues and consolidate previously learned skills. They are able to compare and contrast differing localities with their work on Middleton and St Lucia.
- By the time they leave school, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subject. They can identify the features of rivers using appropriate geographical vocabulary. They are able to compare and contrast differing localities with their work on Chembakolli.
- Pupils generally enjoy their geography lessons. They relate well to each other and to their teachers. Behaviour is good.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features.

- The lessons observed had a good pace. There was a clear structure and a variety of teaching and learning approaches were used. These were carefully selected to build on previous learning and extend pupils' thinking. Pupils' work shows that this does not always occur in geography lessons.
- Planning is thorough and appropriate resources are selected to engage pupils. Good use is made to ensure that pupils clearly understand what they are expected to learn in the lesson. Frequent reference is made to these outcomes during the lesson and this helps them to consolidate their learning.
- Pupils respond well to opportunities to work collaboratively as well as independently.
- Pupils would make better progress if the work set took into account their different learning needs. Scrutiny of work shows that much of the work set is similar for most pupils. Higher attaining pupils, in particular are often insufficiently challenged.
- A good start has been made in modifying and developing more rigorous approaches to assessment, but implementation is at an early stage. In addition, marking does not always inform pupils how they can improve. There are clear proposals to address this later in the year.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features.

- The geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. The recently revised policy identifies key themes to be studied but the amount of time allocated is less than that recommended. Consequently, this does

not allow pupils to develop or extend their skills, knowledge and understanding beyond a satisfactory level, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

- The school indicates that additional cross curricular themes such as work on the Brazilian rain forest and orienteering support the geography curriculum, but evidence of this work was not provided or seen. In addition, these themes are not currently identified in the policy or schemes of work.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of global issues and are increasing their understanding of their complexity through involvement in projects such as 'Growing Gains'. There is a good emphasis on environmental change and sustainable development. Issues such as recycling and climate change are explored well.
- ICT is used well to support pupils' learning. This enables pupils to re-enforce and develop their geographical skills. Events such as 'Black History Week' contribute well to the geography curriculum.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school, to Money Lane Farm, Rosliston and the River Cole motivate and inspire pupils. They are highly valued and contribute positively to the subject and pupils' learning. Pupils' fieldwork skills are appropriate for their age.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- Following amalgamation, the subject leader has successfully created a clear policy and blended together a coherent programme of study.
- A good range of monitoring and evaluation activity has been undertaken, providing the subject leader with an accurate understanding of the strengths in the subject and the areas which need further development.
- An appropriate plan which incorporates a manageable range of developments required to bring about further improvement has been actioned.
- Attendance at some recent training and development events is helping the subject leader inform herself about current issues in the subject.
- The subject leader has led staff in-service training and development. She has recently begun a process of implementing change but there has been insufficient time for these to impact.

Subject issue

Planning and progression in geography is satisfactory.

- Recently revised schemes of work are beginning to focus on the teaching and learning of specific skills and knowledge and understanding, but these are at an early stage of development.
- Geographical enquiry is well promoted through the medium and long term planning and ensures that pupils progressively can build up their knowledge, skills and understanding in geography. The school is

developing more relevant units of work that are naturally linked to other subjects. However, although geography is taught in other subjects, these are not clearly identified in the policy or schemes of work.

- The scrutiny of geography books shows satisfactory progression throughout the school but there is insufficient depth, particularly in Years 5 and 6. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged by some of the tasks set.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory with good features.

- In the lessons observed, well targeted differentiated activities and suitable tasks were provided for most pupils with different learning needs. Questioning was widely distributed and involved all pupils. Boys and girls had equal access.
- Teaching assistants were well deployed to support individual or groups of pupils so that they could access the full range of learning opportunities. As a result, most pupils with learning difficulties make good progress.
- Scrutiny of work shows that higher attaining pupils are often not provided with sufficient challenge. As a result, they do not make sufficient progress.

Areas for improvement

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

- continue to review the curriculum and link subjects together where appropriate to make geography even more interesting, relevant and enjoyable for pupils
- identify cross curricular links more clearly in the policy and schemes of work
- increase the amount of challenge for higher attaining pupils
- develop marking policies which help inform pupils clearly how well they have done, and what they need to do next, to improve
- refine assessment practices to effectively track pupils' progress and support teachers' 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