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04 October 2007

Miss Hodgson
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Hodgson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 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 school's response to 'Excellence and Enjoyment' and how this is impacting on provision in geography, particularly in terms of planning and progression.

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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Standards are broadly average by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Few pupils reach standards which are higher than this.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 soundly recall information from the topics they study. Using appropriate geographical vocabulary, they are able to describe

the features of different places at a standard appropriate to their age. For example, pupils in Year 6 understand how mountain environments affect human activities, accurately identifying links with important physical features.

- Across the school, pupils learn to comment on their environment and how it can be managed and improved. Older pupils show a good understanding of several local environmental issues.
- Although pupils use different geographical resources for enquiry, they lack independence in posing and answering questions. For example, internet resources are sometimes copied rather than used selectively for information.
- Overall, pupils' behaviour is good and they respond well to the clear expectations of their teachers to work hard. They collaborate together well.
- Pupils are generally keen about their work in geography. They comment that they enjoy opportunities for problem solving, doing research and using information communication technology (ICT) for presenting their work and would like to do more of these kinds of activities.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory.

- Teachers make learning objectives clear to pupils and recap on learning at the end of lessons. However, success criteria are not precise enough to enable teachers to measure pupils' progress accurately and make it possible for them to provide clearer guidance to inform pupils on what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully and select resources to engage and interest pupils. They plan for a variety of learning activities. Consequently, pupils try hard and work together well in pairs and in small groups.
- Sometimes worksheets are used which limit progress to labelling diagrams and maps, and the work is not directly related to real examples of places.
- More able pupils require a greater challenge in order to make more rapid progress. Sometimes, the work which is set does not stretch these pupils.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Planning satisfactorily incorporates national units of work and meets statutory requirements.
- Teachers make use of the flexibility afforded by the school timetable to study some topics in more depth.

- There is a growing use of the local area for study. All year groups in Key Stage 2 have the benefit of work which draws upon topical geographical issues in the news.
- There is no common approach to planning the scheme of work for each unit. The quality is better, and intentions are clearer, when these are planned in detail rather than by brief annotations to the nationally produced units.
- There is no portfolio of examples of pupils' work to illustrate National Curriculum levels across the school.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- Recent changes have extended the role of the co-ordinator from one of providing support to one of leading subject development and monitoring learning.
- There is a suitable action plan in place but it needs to be pursued with more urgency.
- The recent decision to strengthen the study of the local environment has strengthened links with local schools.
- There has been little opportunity for the professional development of the subject leader.

Subject issue

The impact of curriculum planning on progression and the quality of provision in geography is satisfactory.

- The long-term curriculum plan has been adjusted to take account of changes to mixed-age classes to minimise overlaps in content.
- Teachers sometimes take opportunities to link geography to work in other subjects, such as literacy and ICT, but this is not planned for strategically.
- The development underway for a whole-school study of the nearby coastline in collaboration with an advanced skills teacher from a local secondary school has raised awareness of the need to clarify progression in geographical skills and concepts.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is satisfactory overall.

- Pupils with learning difficulties or who are at an early stage of learning English are well supported by teaching assistants.
- Teachers plan activities which take account of pupils' different learning styles.

- Pupils that are more able require greater challenge in some of the tasks set.

Areas for improvement

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

- ensure that there is more consistent challenge in the teaching to bring about faster progress overall and to stretch the more able pupils
- improve the assessment of pupils' work in order to provide them with better guidance on how to do better and to assist teachers with planning the progress that pupils need to make
- ensure that the curriculum provides secure opportunities for pupils to progressively build on the knowledge and skills acquired in previous work
- ensure that the subject leader receives the training and support needed to carry out the role effectively.

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

Ralph Higgs
Additional inspector