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Mr Sutton
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Dear Mr Sutton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 February 2008 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 one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are in line with national expectations.

- Given their starting points, pupils' achievement overall in geography is good. They make good progress in lessons.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to describe simple differences in places at a range of scales. They have a basic factual knowledge of certain countries and are aware of some similarities and differences between them. They know that different modes of

transport have to be used to reach different countries. They understand the purpose of maps and are beginning to draw and label simple maps. They can explain the difference between a village, town and city.

- At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are able to write persuasive arguments for decisions such as the advantages and disadvantages of building a new airport. They have a sound understanding of physical processes, for example, how mountains are formed. Their place knowledge is good and they can describe where various countries and features, such as mountain ranges, are located. They know how to use an atlas to look up information and find specific places.
- Through the school's international links, pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding of countries not usually taught, including Uganda, Poland and Sweden. They speak enthusiastically about the school's links with these countries.
- Pupils enjoy geography and are keen to be involved in lessons. Their behaviour is good.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers plan lessons that have clear learning outcomes and a variety of activities to ensure that these are met. The outcomes are shared with the pupils so they know what the focus of the learning is.
- Lessons are clearly structured and a range of activities and pupil groupings are used well to ensure engagement in learning. Teachers make good use of the interactive white board and a wide variety of printed resources to support learning.
- A variety of approaches is used well in plenaries to recap what pupils have learnt and identify the next stages.
- Overall, pupils' work confirms that the curriculum is being covered, but there is less evidence to indicate that the strategies identified in the medium term plans, to meet the needs of all pupils, are fully carried out in lessons.
- Pupils' work in geography is marked regularly but the quality of marking is variable. In the best examples, marking focuses on what pupils have learnt and how they can improve this.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced with published schemes of work being adapted where appropriate to meet the school's needs.
- The blocking of the curriculum ensures that pupils get a short, yet intensive, experience of geography on a regular basis. The delivery of

geography in blocks ensures that there is sufficient time provided to deliver each unit.

- The school's international links are used very effectively to provide a context for learning in specific units. A very good example of this is the Year 6 unit on mountains which has been adapted to further extend learning from the school's visit to southern Poland.
- There are good opportunities for fieldwork in each year including residential and international visits in Years 5 and 6. The development of fieldwork skills is not mapped across the curriculum.
- There are good displays in classrooms to support the topics being taught.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- Although the coordinator is new in post, she has already had a positive impact on the subject. She is clear about the need to further improve standards and how this can be achieved.
- There is a clear policy in place which makes good links to the key concepts in the National Curriculum and the school's international work.
- A review of the curriculum by mapping the skills and aspects across all the units has provided the coordinator with a clear view of progression in geography.
- There is regular monitoring and evaluation of the work in geography through the scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and lesson observation. The outcomes of this have been used by the coordinator to inform her evaluation of geography and form the basis of the subject action plan.

Subject issue

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

- Geography is using the school's excellent international links to good effect in making the curriculum more relevant for the pupils.
- The school is piloting a thematic approach to learning in one year group using 'journeys' as the overall guiding theme. Geography is involved in this.
- Teachers are becoming more confident in adapting published schemes to meet the needs of pupils and are linking these to school initiatives such as Eco School status.
- There is one afternoon of enrichment activities each week which allows pupils to select the topics they wish to study. Geographical units are offered as part of this curriculum and extend the work of the usual curriculum.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is good overall.

- Planning at the scheme of work level clearly identifies strategies and activities to meet the needs of specific groups. Good reference is made to ways in which support and extension tasks can be provided for individuals.
- In the lesson observed, questioning was widely distributed and involved all pupils. Boys and girls were full involved.
- Pupils reported that they were fully involved in lessons and that they were given support when needed.

Areas for improvement

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

- sharpen the action plan so that the success criteria focus on improving standards
- develop the assessment strategy to include the use of National Curriculum levels in each unit of work and identify this in the medium term plans
- ensure the planned strategies for meeting the needs of all pupils are carried out in all lessons.

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 Dowgill
Additional Inspector