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Mr S Jewell  
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Dear Mr Jewell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 and 14 February 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 how literacy is being used to enhance learning 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of data and students' work and the observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both outstanding.

- Students' standards are broadly average on entry to the school and they make good progress during Years 8 and 9. Their standards are above average at the end of Year 9.
- Geography is a popular GCSE option subject, and the majority who continue to study geography make good progress and their results are well above national averages at the end of Year 11. In 2007, their

results exceeded St Andrew's specialist school's target and students' results in geography were better than their results in other subjects.

- Students' standards were very high in their oral coursework. They showed a very good understanding of the relationships between several factors as they answered the question "To what extent should fuel prices rise to protect the environment?"
- In their studies of central Chichester, students applied their very good information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively, used good extended writing skills, and drew conclusions that were based on a very good range of fieldwork evidence.
- In lessons, students behaved very well and were keen to learn and contribute to lessons. Students of all abilities tackled their work very positively and this contributed to their consistently good achievement.

### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Lessons provide a good level of challenge for students of all abilities. Teaching assistants are used effectively and support the learning of a good range of students.
- Teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboards in each classroom. Students enjoy the eye-catching images and the very effective use of video and presentation software, which they feel help make the subject relevant.
- Lessons include very good sequences of learning activities that actively involve the students, including presenting news reports and solving mysteries. Teachers give very good feedback to students when they contribute to lessons, and often refer to the requirements of different GCSE grades and National Curriculum levels.
- Students' work is marked frequently and gives clear feedback on strengths and how to improve. Students regularly assess their own work and the work of other students.
- The progress of each GCSE student is carefully monitored and there is a support strategy for each student at risk of underachieving.
- There is not yet a portfolio of students' assessed work for Years 8 and 9 to use with pupils and new staff to demonstrate the expected high standards.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- There are detailed medium-term plans for each unit of work, and these give a very good framework for progression in students' learning of knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The units of work give students good opportunities for initiative, creativity, research and enquiry, and include education for

sustainability and global awareness. However, students do not have opportunities to use geographical information systems during Years 8 and 9.

- There is fieldwork for all students in Years 8, 9 and 11. In addition, there are additional enrichment opportunities for some students as, for example, when some Year 10 geography students visit Stamford Bridge with students taking GCSE in physical education.
- Geography has a good impact as part of the school's humanities specialist status. For example, a humanities week at the end of the summer term included specially planned geography lessons, lunchtime activities and competitions aimed at increasing students' understanding of sustainability and what it means to lead a sustainable lifestyle. As part of this, St Andrew's organised a Sustainability Challenge for Year 8 and 9 students from four schools. Students' tasks included work in geography, design and technology and science.

### Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are outstanding.

- The high quality geography improvement plan focuses on raising students' standards and improving their achievement. There is an excellent mid-year review of progress with this very effective improvement plan. This plan for 2007-8 is part of a 3 year geography strategic plan.
- Effective collaboration with some other subjects, including English, science and physical education, is helping to improve students' enjoyment and learning.
- The accurate self-evaluation of geography involves a good range of stakeholders including the students and governing body.
- Many resources, including the schemes of work, are stored on the school's Intranet and are readily accessible to teachers and students.
- There is a very good capacity for further improvement because of the committed team of geography teachers, the effective improvement planning, and the good track record of improvement in the last few years.

### Subject issue

The extent to which literacy is being used to enhance learning in geography is outstanding.

- Three years ago, the geography department monitored the range of writing styles students used and then revised its schemes of work to ensure that students have the opportunities for the full range of writing styles.
- Students have very good opportunities for using a range of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Recently, these opportunities have

been enhanced by collaborative planning with the English department to write two units of work that raise students' levels of achievement and literacy in geography.

- A unit of work on the geography of crime includes students' critical reading of newspaper reports about crime. Another unit on energy in the future called "Can Nuclear Save Us?" includes debates that involve all students carrying out research so that they can take the roles of experts and contribute to debates before writing a persuasive letter.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is outstanding overall.

- In all the lessons seen, work was very well matched to students' differing learning needs and there was a purposeful, collaborative ethos so that all students were fully involved in learning across the full range of Key Stage 3 sets.
- All students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make good progress.
- More able students achieve high GCSE grades. Year 8 gifted and talented students recently attended a residential course and studied the tourist industry in imaginative ways.
- The progress of minority ethnic students is carefully monitored, and they achieve as well as other students.

## Areas for improvement

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

- introduce geographical information systems in Years 8 and 9 so that students can compare different maps and data about the same place
- produce a portfolio of students' work from Years 8 and 9 that shows and explains the expected standards.

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

Mike Milton  
Additional Inspector