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21 July 2008

Mrs P Phillips
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Phillips

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 30 June 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of provision for geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Standards are generally above national expectations. In most classes pupils demonstrate good and wide ranging geographical knowledge and understanding as a result of their investigations.

- In general, all groups of pupils make good progress but there are instances when lower attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could because the learning resources are too difficult or learning objectives are insufficiently clear.
- Examples of good work include that of Year 2 pupils who compared Folkestone as it is now and as it was in the past, and completed excellent maps of Lulworth Cove showing features of physical and human geography.
- Good work in Year 6 included pupils' enquiry into whether or not the village High Street should be closed; they collected a good range of data and showed awareness of the impact of changes on different groups of people in the village.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding and adds much to their learning. They are interested in learning and respond very well to good teaching.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good overall.

- Common strengths of lessons include an emphasis on teaching geographical vocabulary, effective use of questions to extend pupils' understanding, good use of interactive whiteboards, and the use of teaching assistants to help all pupils learn.
- One excellent lesson was characterised by a very well structured sequence of interesting learning activities together with calm, brisk teaching that resulted in pupils' rapid learning of map work skills. All groups of pupils achieved equally well because different tasks and learning resources were very well matched to pupils' learning needs by the teacher and teaching assistant.
- On occasion, learning activities are not focused sharply enough on the desired learning objectives.
- Each pupil's progress is assessed against the key learning objectives for each unit of work. Pupils have individual records of their progress.
- Although assessment is accurate, the school has not yet compiled a portfolio of selected pupils' assessed work to demonstrate the expected standards in each year group.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- There is a clear system of geography curriculum planning, and the school adapts national guidance to meet its pupils' interests and learning needs. This provides good treatment of the programme of study in range and depth, and there are good cross curricular links.
- Pupils have a good range of fieldwork opportunities including a residential visit to Wales (which Year 5 and 6 pupils enjoy immensely)

and local fieldwork, although the school is not making full use of its rich local environment to enhance pupils' outdoor learning.

- Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' learning about other cultures as, for example, an India day and stories from southern Asia are linked to the study of a village in southern India.
- The school has the Eco-Schools' silver award, and education for sustainability is a strong theme across the whole school and in some geography units of work.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- There is a good range of informal monitoring activities for geography but findings are not used systematically to secure improvement.
- The school knows the strengths and weaknesses of its geography provision, and the weaknesses are being addressed in a geography action plan although this lacks success criteria that focus on pupils' achievement.
- The school's expectations of the geography subject leader's role are being raised, and the leader is taking a more proactive whole-school responsibility for improvement.

Subject issue

- Good links are being developed between geography and other subjects including, for instance, history and information and communication technology. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils used the Internet to research Gabon and identify what has changed since Victorian times when it was visited by Mary Kingsley. Pupils' modern languages work is similarly linked to the study of Europe and France.
- Monitoring has identified areas for improvement including opportunities for local fieldwork and the school has started to address these.
- The school has adapted national guidance on what to teach in geography lessons and this provides a sound basis for progression in pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding. There is sufficient planned time for the teaching of geography.

Areas for improvement

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

- compile a portfolio of pupils' work to demonstrate the expected standards for outcomes in each year group
- make greater use of the school's rich local environment for geography fieldwork so that pupils' skills improve year on year
- ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they are able.

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