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Ms S McGonagle
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Dear Ms McGonagle

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 May 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement are both good.

- Carefully chosen geography themes provide interest and generate enthusiasm for pupils. As a result, the majority make good progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding leading to above-average standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.

- In Reception, pupils explore some features of their local environment and are able to draw simple maps using directional language. In their study of places visited on holiday they have compared different localities using maps and globes. They understand that different weather conditions influence activity; for example, that hotter places are more popular as holiday destinations.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, map work skills are developed further. Pupils are able to recognise some human and physical features in their locality by undertaking a traffic survey in Cawston. They are aware that the world extends beyond their locality through their study of Guernsey, Jersey and Mexico. They know that foods come from different countries. Good use is made of atlases, information books and the internet for research.
- Work is appropriately developed in Years 3 and 4, where pupils increase their understanding of environmental issues and consolidate previously learned skills. Pupils can identify the features of coastal erosion using appropriate geographical vocabulary. Work on rainforests and Kirua in Africa helps to compare and contrast differing localities and increase their understanding of global issues.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of work they have studied. They are able to present their work in interesting and creative ways using appropriate geographical vocabulary. Their work on natural disasters uses recent examples of destruction in China and Burma to increase their understanding of global issues. Work on Australia helps to further compare and contrast differing localities.
- Pupils are keen and interested in their work. Their behaviour is exceptionally good and they respond very well to clear classroom expectations. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Lessons are well planned and structured by teachers. A good range of interesting activities are carefully chosen to extend pupils' thinking.
- Learning objectives are made clear to pupils and revisited appropriately during lessons. Pupils are encouraged to clarify the learning outcomes at the end of each lesson. Together, these help pupils to increase and consolidate new learning.
- A variety of learning techniques are used to stimulate interest. Pupils respond well to the good range of opportunities presented to them. In particular, pupils react well to drama, role play, information and communication technology (ICT) and visual resources which help bring the subject to life.
- Scrutiny of books shows that work appropriately meets the needs of pupils. Higher attaining pupils are provided with additional challenge which helps them make good progress.
- Teachers' plans are appropriately evaluated and annotated at the end of each lesson and this successfully helps inform future lessons. Assessment

folders track pupils' geography progress sequentially throughout the school.

- Although marking is regular, it does not always inform pupils about what they need to do next to improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The geography curriculum is good with appropriate breadth and balance and sufficient time for its delivery.
- In an effort to improve the curriculum from good to outstanding, additional work is planned to develop further the creative curriculum, to ensure geography skills progress sequentially and fieldwork is linked explicitly to each theme.
- The school is satisfactorily resourced, although more maps and atlases are required to support teaching and learning further. In addition, there is little evidence that large scale maps such as Ordnance Survey maps are used to support learning.
- Very good opportunities are provided to develop speaking and listening, reading and writing skills in geography lessons. There are good cross-curricular links with other subjects, particularly English, history and science.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school and to Cawston, Rugby, Woburn Safari Park and The Think Tank contribute well to the subject and pupils' learning.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of global issues and fully understand their complexity as a result of their Eco-School's work. There is a good emphasis on environmental change and sustainable development throughout the school. Issues such as recycling and climate change are explored well.
- Geography displays are informative, add interest and help enhance the planned curriculum by supporting pupils in their learning.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic and has swiftly established herself in the school. She leads well by example.
- She has a good understanding of the strengths in the subject and the areas which need further development through a range of appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategies.
- Accurate self-evaluation has been used to produce an appropriate plan of action which incorporates a manageable range of developments required to bring about further improvement. The geography policy is in need of review.

- The subject leader has not yet had the opportunity to attend training to help her to develop her subject leadership role, inform herself about current issues in geography and establish links with other subject leaders.

Subject issue

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

- Teachers are developing more interesting programmes of study for pupils that are naturally linked to other subjects such as English, science and history. This work is ongoing.
- Teachers plan thoroughly in the long and medium term with good coverage of key learning objectives. Teachers ensure there is a suitable range of geographical enquiry which results in good progression of geography skills, knowledge and understanding.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is good overall.

- Lessons are well planned with differentiated activities and suitable tasks provided for pupils with different learning needs.
- Boys and girls have equal access. Questioning is widely distributed and involves all pupils. However, on some occasions supplementary questions do not challenge or extend pupils further.
- Teaching assistants are generally well deployed to support individual or groups of pupils so that they can access the full range of learning opportunities.

Areas for improvement

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

- continue developing interesting themes which engage and stimulate pupils and link naturally to other subjects
- purchase additional resources to support further the geography curriculum
- ensure marking in pupils' books identifies clearly what they need to do next to improve.

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