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23 May 2008

Mrs Griffiths  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Griffiths

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 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 one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards overall 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 attaining standards in line with the national average. They understand geography to be about places, countries, and people and where they live.

- Pupils can accurately describe human and physical features and give simple explanations for their classification. They are aware of some basic map conventions and are beginning to draw plan view maps. They are developing a factual knowledge about places, for example, they know the countries that make up the United Kingdom and can name the main places in certain countries.
- At end of Key Stage 2, most pupils attain standards that are in line with national standards but a small minority are working above the national average.
- Older pupils demonstrate a good understanding of key terms related to physical geography and can explain the processes that result in particular landforms, such as those related to rivers and plate tectonics.
- Through the study of specific issues, Key Stage 2 pupils are aware that there is more than one side to an argument and appreciate that different points of view have value. They understand how certain cultural values may effect people's actions.
- Older pupils are capable of undertaking independent research activities and can analyse effectively a range of materials. They are aware of green issues and the impact of local actions on the environment and have a sound understanding of sustainability.
- There are high levels of engagement in geography lessons and pupils enjoy the planned activities, as seen in the very good relationships with teachers and other adults and in their willingness to talk about what they have learnt.

### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers plan lessons with clear learning outcomes which are shared with pupils so they know what is expected of them.
- Lessons have a clear structure and include a range of activities that allow all pupils to meet the planned learning outcomes. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to decide how they are to respond to certain pieces of work.
- Teachers group pupils effectively in order to encourage discussion to maximise learning. Pairing pupils and larger groups are used effectively to engage them in their learning. Role play is used well with older pupils and all are involved in making presentations to the rest of the class.
- Interactive whiteboards are used well to support learning, with a good example in Year 2 of a 'live link' bringing the geography to life for the pupils.
- Teacher questioning is a strength, with well-targeted questions used to recap learning and challenge pupils' understanding.

- Pupils' work in geography is marked regularly with a focus on quality, completion and effort. However, comments indicating what pupils need to do to improve appear less frequently.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school has taken an innovative approach to the curriculum which is now organised through a series of guiding topics rather than subjects.
- The new 'creative curriculum' has provided more relevance to what is being taught and allows for greater flexibility and topicality. Teachers feel more empowered and older pupils report an increased engagement. The school's work on UNICEF's Rights Respecting School is also evident in the new curriculum.
- The provision for geography is mapped across the curriculum at all levels of planning and coverage of the subject is good, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- There are good opportunities for fieldwork in each year including residential visits in Years 4, 5 and 6. These visits allow for the practical application of geography as well as developing understanding in other subjects and a range of social skills.
- There are very good displays in classrooms to support and celebrate pupils' learning of the topics being studied.

## Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of geography across the school and a clear rationale for its inclusion in the new curriculum.
- The subject leader is enthusiastic and has a good understanding of requirements of the role. Monitoring and evaluation of various aspects of geography, including lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work, are undertaken on a regular basis. The subject action plan is a working document that is regularly reviewed.
- There is a good geography policy in place that was recently reviewed and which includes all the relevant aspects. Geography is reported on annually but does not always sharply focus on the quality of teaching or achievement and standards.
- Through the subject leader's assessment portfolio, pupils' work in geography is assessed and moderated on a regular basis and each pupil's performance in geography is closely tracked as they move through the school.

## Subject issue

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

- The school has taken on board fully 'Excellence and Enjoyment' and has redesigned a new 'creative curriculum' to reflect the spirit of this document. This new curriculum is driven by the humanities and science.
- Geography is covered well in the new curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 2, and the topics are being reviewed regularly to ensure that, where appropriate, subject coverage is included.
- Pupil outcomes indicate that there is progression in geographical knowledge, understanding and skill development.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is good overall.

- In the lessons observed, teacher questioning was well targeted to include pupils of all abilities. All responses were valued equally.
- Pupils reported that the new approach to the curriculum meant that teachers were fully involving them all in lessons and that they were given support when needed.
- Pupils are supported effectively by teaching assistants so they have access to the full range of work.

## Areas for improvement

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

- review the coverage of geography in Key Stage 1, particularly the elements relating to the breadth of study
- build a range of assessment opportunities into the new curriculum, ensuring that all aspects of geography are assessed over each key stage
- ensure that assessment tasks allow pupils to access the full range of levels.

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