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Mr Coyne
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Dear Mr Coyne

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 June 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 two lessons, one from each key stage.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory and standards overall are in line with national expectations.

- Pupils' achievement overall in geography is satisfactory. They made good progress in the lessons observed.
- The standards pupils attain at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with the national average. They understand geography to be about places and people.

- Key Stage 1 pupils can identify simple geographical features and understand how distance can affect travel. They know what an atlas is and are beginning to understand what different maps show. They have some basic place knowledge, for example, of the different countries that make up the United Kingdom.
- At end of Key Stage 2, most pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations.
- They are able to compare and contrast the main differences between two places and have developed a good level of mapskills. Their knowledge of physical geography is more limited, although they understand the meaning of some key geographical vocabulary.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good, which is a reflection of the well established relationships with teachers and other adults. They are very willing to talk about what they have learnt.
- Good planning at the lesson level supports pupils of all abilities. In the lessons observed, all pupils were involved in the learning and good support was provided by the teaching assistants.
- Evidence from pupils' work indicates that not all pupils are able to access the full range of work to the same degree.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Although the lessons observed during the visit were at least good, too much pupils' written work is incomplete and does not demonstrate a sufficient range of challenge and activities to meet the needs of all pupils.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to undertake extended writing in geography and too much emphasis is placed on mapwork as the written outcome in geography to the detriment of other activities.
- Marking of pupils' work in geography focuses on completion and effort rather than learning in geography. There are few comments indicating to pupils what they need to do to improve.
- In the lessons observed, the teachers shared clear learning outcomes with the pupils so they knew what was expected of them. The lessons had a clear structure and a good range of activities.
- Teachers grouped pupils well to maximise learning and this helped in their engagement. Teachers used questioning effectively to support pupils' learning.
- Interactive whiteboards were used well to support learning, with an excellent example in Year 5 of the use of a range of maps at different scales to demonstrate the location of London.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The overall geography curriculum plan indicates that there is satisfactory breadth and balance across both key stages, with a clear focus on the local environment.
- Pupils' work however shows that progression through the curriculum is not clearly planned.
- There are medium terms plans in place for each module in geography but the varying approaches used in planning units in different year groups do not support the consistent implementation of the curriculum.
- There is no planned programme of assessment across the curriculum identifying the key aspects of each unit that should be assessed.
- There are good displays in classrooms and around the school to support pupils' work in geography.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- The geography coordinator is enthusiastic and is beginning to bring about positive changes in the subject but has not yet had sufficient impact on improving pupils' achievement.
- There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of work in geography.
- There is a sound geography policy and subject action plan in place. The action plan identifies key areas for improvement but does not focus sufficiently on improving standards.
- A good range of resources are available including globes and atlases in each classroom.

Subject issue

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

- The school has moved towards an integrated curriculum with a guiding theme for each terms work and geography has been included in most of these themes.
- Overall, progression in geography across the school is currently not well planned for with regard to developing pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement

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

- ensure that there is clear progression across the curriculum and that a consistent approach is used for medium term planning
- put in place a planned programme of assessment across the curriculum with a supporting portfolio of pupils' work annotated with National

Curriculum levels to aid teachers' understanding of progress in geography

- develop the coordinators role in monitoring both the quality of teaching and pupils' work
- provide more opportunities for pupils to undertake extended writing in geography.

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