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Mrs Gellatly
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Dear Mrs Gellatly

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 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 one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good with some aspects which are outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards overall are above national expectations.

- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrate good basic geographic knowledge including knowing the countries in the United Kingdom, capital cities and main points of the compass. They are able to use simple atlases to locate countries around the world and are able to accurately shade and label these onto outline maps.

- Pupils can describe the differences between two contrasting locations and are able to ask simple geographic questions. They are beginning to write structured, longer pieces of work, such as letters about places. From fieldwork activities they are able to construct simple tally charts of their results, for example, about local road safety problems.
- At end of Key Stage 2, most pupils are attaining standards that are above national expectations. They demonstrate a good understanding of physical processes such as those related to the water cycle and coastal landform formation. Pupils have a good understanding of a broad range of geography-specific vocabulary and use this accurately. They have a good knowledge of fieldwork techniques.
- Pupils capably undertake independent research activities, analysing effectively a range of materials and producing extended pieces of written work to present their findings.
- They also demonstrate good place knowledge and understand that there are a number of different natural environments and can accurately locate these.
- Pupils enjoy geography as seen by their high levels of engagement and very positive attitudes towards work. They have excellent relationships with teachers and other adults.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Teachers' lesson plans are of very high quality and include clear learning outcomes that focus on what pupils are expected to learn in geography.
- Teachers use an excellent range of learning activities including role play and discussion, and provide good opportunities for independent research, encouraging pupils to direct their own learning. These activities are carefully planned to allow all pupils to achieve the intended outcomes.
- Pupils are grouped very effectively to support learning. Teachers use groupings that are appropriate to the planned tasks.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about the geography they teach and this is clearly apparent in their confident approach to teaching. They use questioning very effectively to both check and further develop pupils' understanding.
- Lessons have very good pace and challenge.
- A wide range of resources are used to support learning in geography, in particular, Information communication technology (ICT) is used very effectively in whole-class teaching.
- Teaching assistants are very well deployed and carry out their responsibilities confidently.
- The marking of pupils' work in geography is excellent. Work is marked frequently with a focus on the quality of learning and teachers provide pupils with clear guidance as to how they can improve.

- Teachers plan to meet the differing needs of pupils well and use a good range of strategies including different tasks and resources.
- Teacher questioning, in particular the use of structured, open questions, is targeted well to involve all pupils in lessons.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a good emphasis on physical geography especially in upper Key Stage 2.
- The school makes good use of published materials in supporting the curriculum but adapts these well to meet its needs.
- Good quality medium term plans are in place for each unit but these do not clearly identify the key assessment opportunities within each topic studied.
- External visitors are used well to enliven the curriculum.
- Very good opportunities for fieldwork are in place in each year, including residential visits in Years 4, 5 and 6. There is good progression in the development of fieldwork skills across the school.
- Although providing good access to the curriculum for all pupils, there is not a consistent high level of challenge for the most able pupils in geography.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are outstanding.

- Senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the quality of geography across the school. They are committed to ensuring that all pupils experience geography teaching of the highest quality.
- The subject coordinator has a clear vision for geography and enthusiastically goes about ensuring this is implemented across the school.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work in geography is outstanding and results in detailed twice yearly reports on the subject and a well-focused action plan.
- There is a designated governor for geography who is fully involved in the monitoring of the subject through lesson observation and reports back to the governing body on the quality of work seen.
- The annual conference, held to discuss pupils' views of geography, is very effective in providing feedback on what pupils see as good geography.

Subject issue

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

- Geography has a distinct place in the school curriculum and sufficient time is provided for its delivery.
- The curriculum is planned to ensure there is increasing complexity in the work being studied. Progression is most evident in the development of local work and fieldwork.

Areas for improvement

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

- identify in each unit the key aspects of geography to be formally assessed so as to allow for the monitoring of progression in assessment across the curriculum
- develop further the provision for the most 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

Paul Dowgill
Additional Inspector