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22 December 2008

Mrs Ryder
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ryder

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 December 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 how effectively geography teaching and the curriculum promotes community cohesion.

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.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good with several outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are above the national average.

- Pupils make good progress in gaining geographical skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school and reach standards above national expectations in geography.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning geography. They particularly value the memorable learning experiences gained from the visits they make outside school, the way they are encouraged to develop and use

their good levels of locational knowledge and the themed whole school cross-curricular days, for example European Languages Day.

- Pupils are extremely polite, respectful and well behaved and enjoy working together on collaborative activities in geography lessons.
- Pupils develop good thinking, mapwork, fieldwork and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. These equip them with the necessary investigational skills to undertake geographical enquiries.
- Pupils develop their own sense of identity, self-esteem and concern for others through their studies of geography.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) knowledge and understanding of the world is developed through a range of appropriate activities linked to the children's interests and experiences, the locality and to more distant places such as Africa. Extensive use is made of role play to develop children's knowledge of different places and the roles which people undertake within them, such as the role play police station.
- By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have developed a good sense of place and have good awareness of a number of contrasting environments.
- By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good understanding of relevant topical and environmental issues and have a good understanding of physical geography at a variety of scales – local, national and global.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Teachers have very good generic teaching skills, appropriate subject knowledge and understand what constitutes good learning in geography.
- Lessons are very well planned and sequenced to ensure progressive learning and the acquisition of appropriate geographical vocabulary and skills.
- Teachers plan very carefully differentiated geography lessons which cater well for the needs of all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants provide invaluable support in helping pupils to develop geographical skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Outstanding teaching in both key stages captured the pupils' imagination and maximised their learning in geography. High-quality questioning involved all pupils and opportunities were provided for pupils to think, solve problems, look at real issues and confidently share their views and opinions. For example, in Year 2 pupils had to help plan the school's residential visit for older pupils to Llandudno. They had to work out how to get there, what the weather would be like, what they would need to take with them and the types of activities the pupils could engage in whilst they were there. In Year 6 pupils were analysing the results from their recent fieldwork visit to the

local Sankey Canal. They were using this experience to present their findings and make recommendations to the local councillor as to how the area could be improved.

- The school has a range of appropriate geographical resources and good use is made of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Assessment is rigorous. Pupils receive high quality feedback on how to improve their work. School designed knowledge, understanding and skills stickers for geography are used extremely well to ensure pupils understand what they are trying to learn and whether they have achieved their targets.
- The school maintains a useful portfolio of samples of pupils' geographical work but this is not yet linked to National Curriculum levels.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- Curriculum planning and schemes of work ensure curriculum coverage that meets statutory requirements and provides a relevant context for learning.
- The curriculum is well tailored to meet the needs of pupils in this school community through the inclusion of enhancement and locational knowledge strands. These units give pupils a good understanding of the names and locations of political and physical features in the United Kingdom, Europe and the World and make pupils enthusiastic to find out more about places and how they link together.
- The curriculum is constantly reviewed and enhanced. It is planned for as part of a knowledge and understanding of the world dimension which includes Geography, History, Science and Modern Foreign Languages.
- The development of 'mind friendly' and enquiry skills are integral to the geography curriculum.
- The curriculum is flexible and responsive. It is designed to ensure that pupils are very aware of topical issues and can participate in available opportunities, such as those associated with regeneration projects in the local area and the opportunities provided by its International Schools Award status.
- Very good use is made of visits and visitors to raise pupils' awareness of local and global issues, diversity, cultures and traditions.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to their own school environment. The school holds the Bronze Eco school award. Eco officers undertake litter picking, recycling and composting duties and work hard to promote water and energy efficiency in the school.
- High quality displays around the school celebrate the outstanding geography curriculum and pupils' growing knowledge and understanding of the world.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- The school is continuously striving to improve the quality of geography.
- Subject leadership for geography is managed by the recently introduced 'knowledge and understanding of the world' team. This consists of the team leader, a teacher colleague and two teaching assistants. It is too early to assess the full impact of this recent change on achievement and standards but much has already been accomplished.
- The subject leadership team has a clearly defined role in the monitoring and evaluation of geography throughout the school. Accurate annual self-assessments and audits are used to identify strengths and areas for development. These result in actions which improve the quality of geographical work within the school and act as a pilot for the future development of different approaches to the foundation subject curriculum and how these subjects are assessed.
- The subject leadership team has a clear understanding of progression in geography through their analysis of pupils' work and teachers' planning and their discussions with colleagues and pupils. They are able to accurately assess curriculum coverage and the quality of pupils' work.
- Leaders and managers within the school actively promote the links between teaching, learning and the curriculum and community cohesion.
- Leaders and managers pay careful attention to pupils' own evaluations of their learning in their enjoyment and achievement booklets and use this feedback well to inform future plans for geography.
- The school demonstrates a good capacity to continue to improve its work in geography.

Subject issue

The effectiveness of geography teaching and the curriculum in promoting community cohesion is outstanding.

- The school proactively promotes the development of community cohesion through a four-fold approach based on developments in teaching, learning and the curriculum, equity and excellence, engagement and ethos and parents and community.
- Community cohesion is embedded in school life and promoted through geography well.
- The school makes extensive use of local contacts to enrich learning and support teaching.
- The school places great emphasis on the importance of diversity and inclusion at a school, local, national and international scale and is using geography to positively influence pupils' attitudes and values. This

ensures that pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of local and global issues and that they gain an appreciation of life in multi-cultural Britain and their role as global citizens.

- The excellent provision of memorable first and second-hand learning experiences ensures that pupils are provided with opportunities to compare attitudes and values and experience a range of cultures and places.
- The school has good links with two schools in Germany. Pupils have made a photographic record of their school and exchanged information about their school with German pupils by letter and e-mail.
- Pupils have a good understanding of diversity and sustainability issues and get involved in taking responsible action. For example, pupils have been involved in the regeneration of an ornamental garden in a local park with a number of organisations including Sure Start and Age Concern. Pupils also support the work of international charities such as Tearfund and Fairtrade.

Areas for improvement

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

- evaluate recent changes made to the leadership and management of 'knowledge and understanding of the world' to assess the impact on achievement and standards in geography
- enhance the existing portfolio of samples of pupils' geographical work to include annotated links to National Curriculum levels to aid the moderation of teacher assessment.

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

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector