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Mrs Hobbs
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Dear Mrs Hobbs

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography 2008/09

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 November 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are broadly average.

- Pupils make good progress in gaining geographical knowledge and understanding as they move through the school and reach standards broadly in line with national expectations in geography.

- The recent emphasis on developing progression in geographical skills is motivating pupils and giving them the necessary skills to access the geography curriculum.
- Geography begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good use is made of child initiated play, teacher directed activities and the high quality internal and external environment to begin to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world.
- At Key Stage 1 geography focuses effectively on the immediate locality, the identification of geographical features and pupils' observation and recording of their findings. More distant places are studied through good use of secondary sources including visual images, books, artefacts, maps and information and communication technology (ICT).
- At Key Stage 2 pupils develop a good understanding of places and the relationships between human, physical and environmental issues in their focused work on different physical landscapes and locality studies. A good emphasis is placed on the development of mapwork, fieldwork and ICT skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers have good teaching skills, appropriate subject knowledge and understand what constitutes good learning in geography.
- Lessons are planned to capture pupils' interests and enthusiasm for geography. There are very good relationships in classrooms between staff and pupils when learning geography. Pupils are very welcoming, well-behaved and enjoy learning about different places. Pupils' personal development is good.
- Great emphasis is placed on the development of appropriate geographical vocabulary and pupils' locational knowledge. As a result pupils use geographical terms correctly and have a good understanding of the names and locations of continents, countries, cities, landmarks and a range of physical features.
- All of the geography teaching observed during the visit was good. High-quality questioning involved all pupils and opportunities were provided for pupils to think and share their views and opinions.
- Lessons are well planned and sequenced to ensure progressive learning and the acquisition of skills in geography. Year 2 pupils used letter and number co-ordinates to place London landmarks in their correct locations on a map. Year 3 pupils used atlases to locate and recognise the shapes and names of countries and continents. Year 5 pupils used ordnance survey maps, keys and photographs to describe the similarities and differences between a beach they had recently visited and two others in different parts of the country.
- The school has a range of up to date, high quality resources and teachers make effective use of ICT in their teaching.

- Assessment is regularly undertaken. Although pupils' work is marked and commented on teachers do not always provide geography-specific guidance on what pupils need to do to improve in the subject.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Curriculum planning and schemes of work ensure curriculum coverage that meets statutory requirements.
- All groups of pupils have equal access to the curriculum through well-designed, differentiated activities and the good support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The most recent audit of the curriculum identified the need to make geography more relevant in meeting the needs of pupils in the school. As a result the school has re-planned curriculum units to ensure the progressive development of geographical skills, particularly in mapwork. More opportunities are also provided for pupils to study contrasting localities in the United Kingdom and more distant places.
- High quality displays around the school celebrate pupils growing knowledge and understanding of the world. This is gained from first hand experiences such as visits out of school and second hand experiences provided through maps, books, visual resources and the use of visitors to school for focussed days and whole school events.
- The curriculum is flexible enough to ensure that pupils are aware of topical issues and are actively involved in projects to improve their environment. For example, one year group have planned a wildlife area for the school and other pupils have been involved with a range of other agencies in designing a local community playground.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- The subject leader plays an effective role in the monitoring and evaluation of geography in the school. Accurate annual evaluations and audits are used to identify strengths and areas for development.
- The school is continuously striving to improve the quality of geographical work. For example, as a result of the most recent subject audit the need to ensure all pupils reach national expectations in geography was identified. Action was taken to improve progression in geographical skills by reviewing curriculum units and placing a greater emphasis on the necessary development of pupils' mapwork skills. This is already beginning to impact positively on the standard of geography work in the school.
- The subject leader has a clear understanding of progression in geography through her analysis of pupils' work, teachers' planning, her observations and formal and informal discussions with colleagues. She

is able to accurately assess curriculum coverage and the quality and level of pupils' work.

- The subject leader keeps herself up to date in geography through her reading of relevant guidance and reports and utilises subject association materials to enhance practice within the school.
- 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 good.

- The school promotes the strategic development of community cohesion through a three-fold approach based on developments in teaching, learning and the curriculum, equity and excellence and engagement and external activities.
- The school's development plan identifies improving links between community cohesion and the foundation subject curriculum as its current key priority.
- There are good links between geography teaching and the curriculum and community cohesion at a school and local scale.
- The school emphasises the importance of diversity and inclusion at a school and local scale and is using geography to positively influence pupils' attitudes and values.
- The school is aware of the need to develop greater pupil knowledge and understanding of national cultural diversity and communities in more distant places.

Areas for improvement

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

- further develop the school's geography curriculum to ensure it is relevant to this particular school and community
- ensure pupils develop greater knowledge and understanding of national and global issues to enable them to gain a greater appreciation of life in multi-cultural Britain and their role as global citizens
- evaluate the impact of recent developments in geography and the geography curriculum in order to raise standards
- improve feedback on pupils' written work to ensure it informs them how to improve their work 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

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector