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Mrs Bostock  
Headteacher  
Our Lady's Bishop Eton Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Bostock

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 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 with some 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 motivated by geographical learning. They particularly value the memorable learning experiences gained from the many, carefully planned visits they make outside school.
- Pupils are polite, respectful and well behaved and enjoy working together and learning in geography.
- 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.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) pupils get off to a good start in geography. Carefully designed first hand activities use the internal and external environment well. Visits out of school enable pupils to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of the world. Visitors, stories, ICT, role play and small world play are used well to begin to develop pupils' geographical vocabulary and skills.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils study their local environment through locality walks. This allows them to develop their observational and recording skills. More distant places are explored through stories, a visit to the seaside and looking at a more distant locality.
- By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils show good levels of understanding because of the good teaching they receive, the meaningful learning experiences they are provided with and the good relationships within the school.
- In Year 6 pupils study water as a theme. They look at rivers and coasts locally, nationally and globally. They learn to understand the interaction of human, physical and environmental factors. Pupils are confident to discuss their ideas and present the findings from their enquiries using ICT. As a result of their studies they have taken responsible action to support the work of the charity Water Aid.

### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good generic teaching skills, appropriate subject knowledge and understand what constitutes good learning in geography.
- Lessons are well planned and sequenced to ensure progressive learning and the acquisition of appropriate geographical vocabulary and skills. As a result pupils use geographical terms well and are developing useful mapping skills. For example, in mapwork in Year 2 pupils are introduced to simple number and letter grids to locate landmarks on the imaginary island of Struay. In Year 4 pupils confidently use atlases, simple keys and four figure grid references to locate places. In Year 6 pupils use six figure grid references and ordnance survey symbols to identify water features in the landscape.
- Teachers plan carefully differentiated geography lessons which cater well for the needs of all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although they provide challenge and extension

activities for higher attaining pupils, there are too few opportunities for them to work independently and conduct their own geographical investigations.

- All of the geography teaching observed during the visit was either good or outstanding. High-quality questioning involved all pupils and opportunities were provided for pupils to think and share their views and opinions. In Y4 pupils were observed undertaking a collaborative problem solving exercise to equip an island community with ten essential features. To do this they had to devise appropriate symbols and a key, use grid references and take on roles as planners, envoys, spokespeople, graphic designers, cartographers and leaders.
- The school has a range of appropriate geographical resources and good use is made of interactive whiteboard technology during geography lessons.
- Assessment is regularly undertaken at the end of each unit of work. Pupils' work is regularly marked and commented on. There are examples of good target setting and geography-specific guidance on what pupils need to do to improve in the subject in some year groups, but this is not consistent across the school.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- Curriculum planning and schemes of work ensure curriculum coverage that meets statutory requirements.
- The development of thinking and enquiry skills are integral to the geography curriculum.
- The curriculum is flexible and responsive. It is constantly reviewed and enhanced. This ensures pupils are aware of topical issues and can participate in available opportunities, such as those associated with Liverpool's year as the European capital of culture.
- The school's mission statement states that pupils will be taken on visits and visitors will come into school to help them learn. Extensive use is made of carefully planned local, regional and residential fieldwork to enhance the geography curriculum.
- Excellent use is made of visitors to raise pupils' awareness of global issues, diversity, cultures and traditions.
- 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.
- Pupils have a good understanding of diversity and sustainability issues and get involved in taking responsible action. A number of pupils are involved in an extra-curricular group run by members of the local World Centre; pupils have raised considerable amounts of money to support communities in other parts of the world; the school was the

first in Liverpool to gain Fair Trade status for its ethical enterprise activities.

- Pupils also make a positive contribution to their own school environment. Reception pupils plant bulbs to enhance their own outdoor play area. The school council have been instrumental in designing a new play area for the school playground and purchasing large outdoor wall maps for the pupils to use at break and lunchtimes. The school recycles paper and cans; has achieved a world climate centre award; completed the first year of a green travel plan award and is developing a sustainable garden and wildlife area for EYFS pupils.
- The school is aware of the need to develop greater pupil knowledge and understanding of the geography of the United Kingdom.
- 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 subject leader for geography has a clearly defined role in monitoring the quality of geography work in the school. End of unit assessments, teacher evaluations, work scrutiny and regular audits are used to identify areas for further development.
- The school is continuously striving to improve the quality of geography. It utilises subject association membership and good practice publications to enhance practice within the school.
- Leaders and managers within the school actively promote the links between teaching, learning and the curriculum and community cohesion.
- 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 three-fold approach based on developments in teaching, learning and the curriculum, equity and excellence and engagement and ethos.
- Community cohesion is embedded in school life and promoted through each curriculum unit.
- Professional development has been undertaken to enhance staff understanding of community cohesion.

- Staff make extensive use of local contacts to enrich learning and support their teaching.
- The school places great emphasis on the importance of diversity and inclusion at a school, local, national and global 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.

#### Areas for improvement

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

- increase the number of opportunities for pupils, particularly those who are higher attaining, to work more independently in geography
- improve the consistency of feedback on pupils' written work to ensure it informs them how to improve their work in geography
- ensure that pupils develop a greater knowledge and understanding of the geography of the United Kingdom.

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