

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



09 December 2008

Mr N Boyd
Headteacher
Moat Community College
Maidstone Road
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE2 0TU

Dear Mr Boyd

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 and 27 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 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of data, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards are generally below average.

- Students enter school with geography skills and knowledge that are well below average.
- Throughout Key Stage 3 most students make at least satisfactory progress with a significant proportion making good progress. Consequently, by the end of Year 9, the school's data shows standards to be close to national expectations.

- Small numbers of students opt to study geography at GCSE. A significantly higher proportion of girls than boys study geography in Key Stage 4.
- Standards have tended to fluctuate year on year although they have been consistently well below the national average. They were particularly low in 2008.
- School leaders have acted decisively to remedy this. Work in books and lessons show that better teaching, coupled with higher expectations, is resulting in improvements in students' learning. The majority of students are making satisfactory progress and are on track to achieve better outcomes in 2009.
- Student's attitudes and behaviour in lessons are generally good. Teachers enjoy good relationships with students.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features.

- Work is generally well planned with a range and resources carefully selected to make geography lessons interesting. However, the lack of punctuality by some students means that lessons do not always get off to a prompt start.
- Some teaching is good. In these lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and students made good progress because they completed interesting tasks with understanding and at a good pace.
- A good range of activities designed to develop students' speaking and listening skills were used. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on climate, many students were able to interpret climate graphs, recognise the relationship between temperature and rainfall, record key information and present confidently their findings to the class. However, some key geographical vocabulary or words used in some lessons were beyond the level of some students' comprehension.
- A range of assessment for learning techniques was observed. When used well, these effectively promote interest, collaboration and participation. Most teachers use good questioning techniques which help increase student engagement and extend their thinking.
- In satisfactory lessons, the pace of some activities progressed too quickly because teachers moved on to the next phase before students had fully grasped the key concepts or consolidated their learning. As a result, their understanding was not fully secure. On occasions, the pace of learning slowed so that students became distracted from their learning.
- Students' work is marked regularly. End of unit assessments provide students with clear guidance about what they need to do next to improve and targets are regularly shared. However, these have not been internalised by students and are rarely used in lessons to help increase rates of progress. In addition, scrutiny of books shows that some teacher assessments are over-generous.
- Homework is used appropriately to support activities taught in lessons.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The humanities department is successfully modifying the Key Stage 3 curriculum in line with the new programmes of study. Newly constructed schemes of work are appropriate.
- A Year 7 integrated course has been introduced from September for geography, history and religious education. Students say they have particularly enjoyed finding out about the Highfields area of Leicester in greater depth in different subjects.
- The department is reviewing the Key Stage 4 curriculum and the teacher in charge of geography has attended examination board meetings to help inform this decision.
- Participation in the British Council 'Connecting Schools' project and the Rafi.ki global network with links to schools in Tanzania, Oman and Darfur are used well to support the geography curriculum.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily by teachers and students to support their geography work.
- Opportunities are not always taken to use field work and real examples within the immediate locality to motivate and inspire students. However, the Year 11 students speak positively of their trip to Skegness to study coastal erosion.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- Professional development opportunities are used appropriately to support development of geography. Participation in Leicester's geography forum and examination board meetings helps keep the teacher in charge informed of current issues impacting on the subject.
- The subject leader for geography is beginning to provide good subject leadership. Recent improvements in teaching and learning and the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact on achievement and standards.
- A departmental self-evaluation form (SEF) has been produced. Although it is supported by an appropriately range of evidence, many judgements are too generous.
- There is a suitable departmental improvement plan with appropriate areas for development. However, it needs to be sharper in identifying when key actions will be monitored, and when, how and to whom the findings will be reported.
- Data collected from records of achievement is not used effectively to track students' achievements or intervene when they make less than expected progress.

Subject issue

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

- The humanities department supports community cohesion and understands the importance of delivering it through the geography curriculum. A good range of opportunities are provided throughout the school to learn about local, European and global issues.
- The school has a long tradition of involvement in community cohesion projects. Effective links with other schools in the city of Leicester and Leicestershire have helped increase students' understanding and developed relationships with different communities. This has been enhanced by international links with schools and communities in Tanzania, Oman and Darfur.
- In the main, students enjoy good relationships with teachers and each other. Most students are appropriately engaged in their learning. They value each other and relationships between learners from different backgrounds are positive.
- A whole school community cohesion policy to guide the work of the department is not yet complete.

Areas for improvement

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

- ensure that assessment outcomes are used to inform teaching in order to meet the needs of all students and further increase rates of progress
- ensure that data is used effectively to target and intervene at an early stage those students who are identified as not making sufficient progress
- increase fieldwork opportunities so that students are provided regularly with first hand opportunities to support the curriculum and increase their skills
- strengthen the department's improvement plan by identifying precisely how monitoring and evaluation activity will be undertaken and how the outcomes will be disseminated.

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 Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector