

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 0207 421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs J Filtness
Headteacher
Mengham Junior School
Palmerston Road
Hayling Island
PO11 9ET

Dear Mrs Filtness

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 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 on how effectively geography teaching and the curriculum promote 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 and analysis of pupils' work. No lessons were observed as geography was the lead subject in topics which had been taught in all classes earlier in the term. Also, there had been a whole-school Geography Week on Hayling Island earlier in November.

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

Achievement and standards

Standards are satisfactory and achievement is good.

- Pupils make good progress from below average standards when they join the school. Their standards match national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2.

- Pupils from Years 3 and 4 describe and explain the differences at Porchester between Roman times and now.
- In Years 5 and 6, pupils give clear explanations of coastal processes and are aware of the impact that climate change will have on these.
- Pupils are making good progress in developing their enquiry and problem solving skills as a result of the way that geography-led topics are now taught. For example, they identified a good range of questions during their fieldwork at Hengisbury Head which they then researched back at school.
- Pupils are developing their creativity well as a result of the opportunities provided by extended work at home. For example, some pupils have created games about coastal processes and about the geography of Hayling Island, and others have used presentation software to record the findings of their research.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy the opportunities for fieldwork and to ask their own questions and research the answers. They have good attitudes towards the extended work as they are clear about what to include and have sufficient time to complete worthwhile tasks.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of learning is good. No lessons were observed to enable a firm judgement to be made about the quality of the teaching.

- Geography makes good use of pupils' literacy skills as, for example, they make notes about tides or write a balanced argument about a proposed hotel development on St Lucia.
- Pupils know what they are expected to learn in both the geography-led topics and extended work at home.
- The use of assessment in geography is outstanding. Pupils are given an overview sheet at the start of each topic and this gives the assessment criteria for geography, other contributing subjects and the key skills. For some topics, pupils carry out an initial self-assessment against the objectives for the topic, and then repeat this process at the end of the topic to show how much they have learnt.
- There is some peer assessment; for example, when pupils produced guides about the tropical rain forests. Pupils also identify their own targets for improvement.
- Teachers' marking gives pupils targets for improvement and this is done particularly well in Years 5 and 6. However, pupils do not always respond to the comments and questions in teachers' marking.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school is making very good progress in developing its whole curriculum. Topics are based on lead and subsidiary subjects, and are used to teach generic skills. Geography has been used to pilot these changes for other subjects.
- Geography topics are chosen as they motivate and interest the pupils. The geography-led topics are given blocks of time which provide pupils with the opportunity for sustained work.
- Strategies are used that prompt pupils to ask their own questions and then to research answers. For example, pupils from Years 3 and 4 began the topic 'Wet and Wild' by classifying statements as true and false. The misunderstandings that this revealed were used as the basis for their investigations.
- Fieldwork is a strength of the school and the school has achieved *Trailblazer* accreditation for outdoor learning from the local authority. There is very good residential provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6; this provides good opportunities for geographical learning in alternate years. Each class has also had two fieldwork experiences so far this term.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are outstanding.

- The geography leader has excellent subject knowledge. This contributes to the very good progress being made in developing an enjoyable geography curriculum that helps pupils develop a wide range of skills.
- There is excellent monitoring and evaluation of pupils' views about geography-led topics, their recorded work as well as teachers' planning.
- Geography has a detailed, well structured action plan that is helping to improve pupils' rates of achievement.

Subject issue

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

- Pupils have a good understanding of the local community and communities in St Lucia.
- The school is planning a topic later this year to compare London and Paris which will help to develop pupils' understanding of a contrasting community in Europe.

- The school has the Eco-Schools Bronze Award. Pupils act as eco-monitors and have had significant impact on the school's life by, for example, reducing energy use and increased recycling.
- During the geography week, each class investigated a local area and considered how it could be improved. They wrote persuasive letters to the local mayor about proposed improvements although these letters remained unsent.

Areas for improvement

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

- complete the development of new geography topics to support learning in the subject including about more distant localities
- strengthen the use of pupils' practical citizenship skills when they identify ways of improving localities.

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

Mike Milton
Additional Inspector