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Mrs McGory
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McGory

Ofsted survey inspection programme – geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 March 2009 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both satisfactory overall.

- Children's geography skills are developed well in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Frequent visits to Ambarrow Woods help them develop and explore their sense of place well. They enjoy these visits immensely.
- Children are encouraged to ask questions and seek answers. They are able to draw and interpret simple maps and sequence journeys. Through

exploration they increase their understanding of different environments and recognise the changes the different seasons bring.

- Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of themes they have studied. They know that the world extends beyond their locality through their study of Benjamin Bear.
- Pupils increase their understanding of different environments and climatic conditions. They know that they need to wear different types of clothing to suit the weather. They have considered environmental issues around school and undertaken surveys. Through their study of Coll, they increase their understanding of island features. They are able to design simple maps and know that they can get to different places in a variety of ways.
- This work is soundly built on in Years 3 and 4. Through the study of Chembakolli and the increased development of mapwork skills, pupils increase their knowledge of settlements and locations.
- Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress so that by the end of Key Stage 2 standards are broadly average. Pupils are able to use previously learned map skills to locate where different members of their family were born.
- Fieldwork skills are developed appropriately by visiting Sandhurst to complete shopping surveys. Pupils can identify the features of rivers using appropriate geographical vocabulary. However, they are not well experienced in using grid references on Ordnance Survey maps to locate different features.
- Pupils are generally keen and interested in their work. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to clear classroom expectations. Relationships between adults and pupils are good.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- During this visit, some aspects of good teaching were observed. Where teaching was good, work was well planned with the right amount of input and activity. A variety of activities and resources were used which were carefully selected to extend pupils' thinking and add interest to the lessons. Pupils found these opportunities very enjoyable. Pace was brisk.
- Opportunities were also provided to work in a variety of different ways. Pupils' understanding was developed through first hand or practical experiences and targeted questions challenged their thinking. Together, these enabled pupils to further develop their skills of independence and collaboration and consolidate new knowledge.
- Where lessons were satisfactory, some introductory activities were too extended which slowed down the pace of lessons and consequently the rates of progress made by pupils. As a result, some pupils lost their concentration and became disengaged. One lesson tried to cover too much ground. Consequently, explanations became too rushed and there was insufficient time to complete the planned tasks.

- There are some interesting, stimulating and well presented displays of pupil-and teacher-generated work in all classes. Appropriate geographical vocabulary is displayed and referred to.
- Scrutiny of books shows an overuse of commercially produced worksheets in a small number of classes with most pupils undertaking similar work. This restricts writing opportunities and does not allow pupils to develop or extend their skills, knowledge and understanding beyond a satisfactory level, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- An appropriate start has been made in modifying and developing more rigorous approaches to assessment. However, implementation is at an early stage.
- Marking, although regular, does not always inform pupils how well they are doing or how they can improve.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- An adequate number of planned opportunities to teach geography are provided throughout each year but currently, some themes are not taught in sufficient depth. Skills are not built on progressively. The school has recognised these weaknesses and is addressing them.
- New long term and medium term plans have been prepared in readiness for implementation for the beginning of the new academic year. These plans should ensure greater coverage, progression and skills development.
- Visits to Ambarrow Woods, Sandhurst, Horseshoe Lakes and Ufton Court support the curriculum well. They are motivational, highly appreciated and enjoyed by all pupils.
- Appropriate opportunities are provided to develop the Every Child Matters agenda. For example, pupils have surveyed the amount of litter in the playground and provided a range of practical solutions to remedy this problem.
- Good links are made with other subjects in the curriculum. The use of literacy texts such as 'Handa's Surprise', 'Meerkat Mail' and 'The Sleeping Sword' have been used well to support the work in geography. In addition, opportunities are provided to extend pupils' writing skills. These included 'Christmas in different countries' booklets and letters to the headteacher following the litter survey.
- Pupils use an appropriate range of Information Communication Technology resources, including the internet, to support their learning.
- Pupils have a sound knowledge of global issues through the study of different habitats and links with Cura Primary School, Kenya. These enable pupils to understand the interconnectivity and diversity of places.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- The subject leaders' file is well organised and is mostly up to date. Leaders know that the geography policy is in need of revision.
- An appropriate action plan has been constructed with the main priority of raising standards in the subject. Appropriate actions are identified in the plan to bring this to fruition.
- Some recent monitoring and evaluation of the subject has been undertaken through planning and book scrutinies. School leaders have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Leaders know that further monitoring is required when the new curriculum is implemented to check on coverage and skills progression.
- Subject leaders have evaluated resources for the subject. As a result, new maps and atlases have been purchased to replace outdated stock.
- Subject leaders are aware of some current developments in geography by attending co-ordinator meetings run by the local authority.

Subject issue

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

- The school promotes an appropriate range of community cohesion activities. However, these are not drawn together in a map or plan which identifies the purpose of these activities nor ways in which geography can contribute.
- Community cohesion is not yet identified explicitly within geography policy, strategic planning or within the geography schemes of work.
- The school understands the importance of delivering community cohesion through the geography curriculum. An appropriate range of opportunities are provided throughout the school to learn about local, European and global issues. This is helping to broaden pupils' understanding of the world beyond Sandhurst.
- Currently, no evaluation has been undertaken to determine the impact that these activities have on pupils' understanding or learning about community cohesion linked issues.
- Relationships are good. Positive interactions between all learners and staff are successfully encouraged.

Areas for improvement

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

- complete and implement the new connected curriculum
- implement new assessment procedures so that leaders have a better idea of how well pupils are progressing in geography and planning builds on prior learning
- monitor and evaluate the new connected curriculum, ensuring that there is appropriate breadth, depth and progression in geography throughout the school
- identify explicitly how the geography curriculum and related classroom experiences can contribute to community cohesion.

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