

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



24 March 2009

Mr A Davis  
Headteacher  
Dawlish Community College  
Elm Grove Road  
Dawlish  
Devon  
EX7 0BY

Dear Mr Davis

Ofsted 2008-09 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 and 04 February 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 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 students' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are exceptionally high. Achievement is outstanding.

- The standards attained at GCSE are exceptionally high and have been for the past six years. The proportion of students attaining A\*/A grades at GCSE is significantly above the national average for geography. Given the starting points of the students this represents outstanding progress.

- At the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of students attain standards that are in line with or above the national expectations. They make good progress.
- In the lessons observed students made good progress. The standards in Key Stage 4 lessons were above average whilst in Key Stage 3 they were in line with age related expectations.
- GCSE students' exercise books are an excellent record of the work they have completed. They contain comprehensive, detailed and well presented sets of notes supported by accurate maps and diagrams.
- Most students demonstrate a very positive attitude towards geography and this is reflected in their enjoyment of the subject and their very good behaviour.

### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The teaching is consistently of good quality and teachers have high expectations of students, especially at Key Stage 4.
- Teachers' lesson planning is of good quality. They identify suitable learning outcomes for each lesson, although these are not always sufficiently clear in identifying what students of different abilities will be expected to learn.
- A broad range of teaching and learning strategies are used well, especially at Key Stage 3, to engage students and develop their critical thinking skills.
- Although identified in lesson plans, the range of strategies used to meet the needs of all learners is not always given enough attention, particularly in those classes that have a wide range of ability.
- Lessons have clear structure which aids learning. Teachers through their effective questioning and use of time targets ensure that learning moves along at a good pace.
- Marking is regular and detailed. Teachers' comments provide students with good guidance on how to improve although they are not set specific, short-term targets.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced and is frequently reviewed with new, relevant units introduced at regular intervals.
- The overall curriculum plan for Key Stage 3 does not indicate how concepts, skills and values are progressively developed across the key stage.

- A detailed audit of the current curriculum against new requirements has been completed and provides a very good starting point for future developments.
- Formal assessments are built into each unit of work and a good range of strategies are employed to assess students' understanding.
- The fieldwork programme does not support the progressive development of students' skills.
- Preparation of the introduction of the new GCSE specification is well underway.

## Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- The subject leader has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and what improvements are needed and how these can be implemented.
- There is a clear commitment amongst the geography staff to provide a high quality geographical education.
- The subject development plan is well-focused and is a working document. Key issues for improvement are relevant, manageable and are measured against clear success criteria.
- There are good systems in place for the monitoring of the work of the department. Evaluation of the subject is thorough and accurate and is based on a broad range of evidence, although not every aspect is focused sharply enough on impact. Examination data is analysed effectively.
- Geography is a popular subject as indicated by the consistently good uptake at GCSE.
- Access to geography specific professional development opportunities are good, particularly for the subject leader.
- Capacity to improve is very good as shown by the willingness of the department to embrace new initiatives and pilot strategies that can help improve students' experience of geography.

## Subject issue

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

- The subject leader has a good understanding of how geography helps promote community cohesion, in particular in developing students' understanding of a range of issues that effect people both locally and internationally.
- Aspects of community cohesion are addressed well through specific unit so work such as poverty and HIV, settlement and refugees.
- Some students demonstrate a good understanding of, and empathy with, people from a different cultural heritage.

## Areas for improvement

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

- ensure that the teaching and learning strategies used meet the needs of all learners
- have an overall statement for each unit of work in Key Stage 3 that indicates the concepts, skills and values to be learnt and ensure that these are progressively developed across the key stage
- provide more opportunities for students to develop their fieldwork skills.

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 Dowgill  
Additional Inspector