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Mrs C Markham
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Dear Mrs Markham

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography 2009/10

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 June 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 joint observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is currently inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both inadequate.

- Overall, provision in geography is very patchy and as a result pupils make inadequate progress overall in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject.
- Where geography provides a context for learning in other subjects, such as French, teachers are sometimes able to utilise and reinforce geographical skills and locational knowledge through their teaching of the language. As a result, pupils are exposed to good experiences which

encourage them to develop a sound understanding of the geographical diversity of France. However, although valuable in their own right, these are isolated opportunities rather than part of a comprehensive programme which enables progressive development in geographical learning.

- Standards are better in Reception and Key Stage 1 where pupils have greater exposure to geography and at times pupils make reasonable progress. Better use is also made of the outdoor environment to support learning.
- At Key Stage 2, where there is less emphasis on the subject, pupils produce less quality work in geography.
- Skills in geography are better developed than knowledge and understanding. This is partly because pupils are familiar with maps and are given opportunities to consolidate their skills through other activities such as orienteering.
- Pupils are interested on those occasions when they are able to work practically and interactively as evidenced in their French lesson on weather. Their behaviour is good. Relationships with each other and staff are very positive.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching and learning are inadequate overall.

- Some good teaching was observed during the visit. On those occasions when pupils are provided with interesting activities and allowed to express themselves, learning can be good. However, much of the work in geography is repetitive in style and does not engage their interest.
- Scrutiny of books in addition to discussion with pupils, reveals pupils of all abilities completing the same work, with an emphasis on copying information from the board, books or the internet. They have few opportunities to write creatively or in a variety of genres.
- Lessons are frequently teacher dominated with pupils steered towards the correct answer rather than being given time to reflect on their answers or develop their understanding. This does not meet the needs of the majority of learners.
- Questioning does not allow pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. As a result they are provided with information but are rarely able to discuss, deliberate or provide their own opinions.
- There is little depth to the learning. Pupils are often occupied in lessons rather than challenged. There is an over reliance on low level commercially produced worksheets.
- Regular use is made of information and communication technology (ICT), although this is not always used appropriately to stimulate pupils visually or interactively.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. However, pupils are unclear how they are doing or what they must do to improve because the comments frequently praise rather than guide.

- Assessment is focussed on coverage rather than a secure analysis of what pupils' have actually achieved. Assessment is not rigorous enough to help plan next steps in their learning.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the planned curriculum is basically satisfactory overall.

- The planned curriculum ensures that there is coverage of statutory requirements although there is not enough time to study it in sufficient depth, particularly at Key Stage 2. As a result learning is often superficial.
- Geography provides a context for learning in some other subjects as well as in themed days. The quality of the geography varies dependent on how confident the teacher is in delivering the subject. Cross-curricular links exist but are not always developed.
- QCA units of work form the basis of the taught curriculum. However, in many cases these have not been updated to make the curriculum more relevant to pupils. Aspects such as sustainability are not covered in sufficient depth.
- The use of the outdoor environment to engage pupils in enjoying geography and improving learning is underdeveloped. Opportunities presented by the residential to Buckden in the Yorkshire Dales are underutilised. Fieldwork is inadequate.
- Geography lacks visibility around the school. There are no displays in classrooms or corridors to celebrate the subject. As a result, the subject has a low profile and pupils are sometimes confused as to 'what geography is!'

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are inadequate.

- A recent evaluation of provision in the subject by senior management has confirmed weaknesses and identified issues which are to be addressed constructively over the next few years. The school is keen to support and develop the subject.
- The development of the subject currently lacks direction as geography expertise in the school is limited. A curriculum framework has been established but is not delivered with sufficient geographical rigour to support learning in the subject.
- There is a lack of awareness of where geography is being delivered or supported in other subjects. As a result the focus is on coverage rather than progression.
- There is a geography policy, but this is in need of further revision to take account of recent developments and amendments.
- The support and advice provided by subject associations has not been utilised to develop subject expertise. Subject-specific professional development has been very limited.

- Resources to support teaching are adequate. The subject is well funded.
- A development plan for the subject is in place. Currently, the focus is on resources and processes such as assessment. Insufficient attention is placed on improving the teaching of geography.

Subject issue

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

- Since subject provision is weak, the subject does not support community cohesion as effectively as it should. It is not identified in planning.
- The school is a diverse and mutually supportive community which reflects the Catholic ethos of the school. The geography teaching programme has not identified how it can utilise this diverse resource to support learning.
- The geography curriculum focuses on factual recall and physical processes such as those associated with rivers or mountains. Human geography is underdeveloped. As a result, pupils get only limited exposure to explore relevant issues such as poverty, migration and interdependence.
- Current provision does not help to broaden pupils' understanding of the world beyond Bradford in sufficient depth or make sufficient use of the pupils' own diverse experiences.
- 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:

- utilise the support provided by the subject associations and other agencies to develop expertise in the teaching of geography
- review the curriculum and links with other subjects to ensure that it is interesting, relevant and enjoyable for pupils and develops their learning progressively
- ensure that pupils have more opportunities to work practically in the outdoor environment and develop their fieldwork skills
- utilise the rich diversity of the school to support community cohesion through geography lessons.

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

Leszek Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector
Specialist Adviser for Geography