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Mr Card
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Card

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 06 May 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 six parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both satisfactory.

- Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in geography.
- In Reception and Year 1, children have an appropriate play based curriculum which develops their knowledge and understanding of the world well. Good geography skills are also being developed.
- Geographical learning is well supported by a wide range of appropriate indoor and outdoor activities. For example, during the visit, children

explored the school grounds to look for different mini-beast habitats and they were able to locate them onto a map. They have also compared and contrasted their environment with a visit to Stockley Farm.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress to achieve broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. They are able to design simple maps and know that they can get to different places in a variety of ways. Following their visit to Glossop, they are able to identify and describe what a place is like.
- Pupils' understanding of their own locality is good but they also understand that the world extends beyond their locality following their study of Mexico.
- Work is suitably developed in Years 3 and 4. Studies of settlements and rainforests, in particular, are taught in greater depth and detail.
- By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. Pupils from Year 5 onwards develop their enquiry skills satisfactorily and have a sound understanding of environmental change and sustainable development.
- The depth and rigour in other work such as their study of developing countries and work on settlements is weaker because it is too superficial. Consequently, pupils have only a basic knowledge and understanding of places and significant environments beyond the United Kingdom.
- Pupils are generally 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 are satisfactory overall.

- Some good teaching was observed during this visit. In these lessons, work was well planned. A variety of activities and resources were used which were carefully selected to extend pupils' thinking and add interest to the lessons.
- Most lessons had a brisk pace. Pupils responded well to precisely targeted questions and opportunities to work in a variety of different ways. In all lessons, good opportunities were provided to develop speaking and listening, reading and writing skills.
- However, scrutiny of books and displays, in addition to discussion with pupils, reveals a more varied picture. There is a better range of work from Foundation Stage to Year 2. Here, skills are developed appropriately and securely and there is sound progression of skills.
- From this point onwards, geography teaching is more variable. In some classes, the subject is not covered in sufficient depth. Specific skills are not fostered and developed in terms of increasing complexity. Pupils' thinking is not challenged well enough to build on the sound foundation provided in earlier years. As a result, this does not allow pupils to develop or extend their skills, knowledge and understanding beyond a satisfactory level. School leaders are aware of this and are beginning to implement strategies to remedy these weaknesses.

- Scrutiny of books and folders show an overuse of worksheets in some classes. Also, insufficient challenge and extension activities are evident for some higher attaining pupils. Consequently, few achieve the higher levels.
- Satisfactory use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) and visual resources by teachers. Pupils use an appropriate range of ICT resources such as using the internet, digital cameras and programmable toys to support their learning.
- Assessment and moderation of pupils' work is focused at the end of each year, based on coverage of planned work not the skills achieved. There is not a secure enough understanding of how well pupils are doing and what needs to be done to help them progress. Outcomes are not used currently to plan next steps in learning or to ensure that that knowledge and understanding develops progressively.
- Pupils do not know how well they are doing in the subject. Marking is variable. Where it is good, it informs pupils how well they have done and what they can do to improve, but this is not always the case.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but with some good features.

- In the main, the geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. However, in some year groups, particularly in Key Stage 2, some units do not allow pupils to study themes in sufficient depth.
- There are good curriculum links with other subjects such as English and mathematics. For example, as part of their environmental work, Year 5 and 6 pupils discussed the poem 'Missing' and created Haikus of high quality.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school, Manor Park, Bolton museum and Formby are greatly enjoyed by pupils. These first hand experiences help bring the subject to life and promote enjoyment and interest. These opportunities also help them to develop their personal and social skills well.
- There is a strong emphasis on environmental change and sustainable development throughout the school. The school's grounds and immediate locality are used well to encourage and support this work. Through their Eco-School's work, pupils have a good awareness of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Geography displays in some classrooms and corridors are interesting and help to enhance the planned curriculum.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- The subject leader is beginning to develop her role but impact is at an early stage. There has been some recent curriculum development where a

more thematic approach to teaching geography has been devised and introduced.

- An evaluation of geography topics is scheduled. It is intended to use the outcomes to make further revisions to themes and schemes of work.
- The subject leader's file is detailed. She has audited staff and has drawn together a suitable action plan for further improvement. Priorities for development are appropriate and accurate, although the actions identified need to be more precise.
- There is a geography policy, but this is in need of further revision to take account of recent developments and amendments.
- Opportunities to systematically monitor and evaluate geography have not been provided in recent years. Consequently, the subject leader does not have a precise view of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject, particularly in teaching and learning and standards and achievement. However, this is being remedied and plans are in place for this to be addressed.
- Some resources such as atlases and globes are out of date and in need of replacement.

Subject issue

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

- An appropriate range of community cohesion activities is promoted. However, these are not drawn together in a map or plan which identifies the purpose of these activities or 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 recognises the importance of delivering community cohesion through the geography curriculum. An appropriate range of opportunities are provided throughout the school to learn about local and global issues. This is helping to broaden pupils' understanding of the world beyond Glossop.
- 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:

- continue to review the curriculum and link subjects together where appropriate to make geography even more interesting, relevant and enjoyable for pupils

- devise a simple method of sharing assessments made by teachers which effectively tracks pupils' progress and helps receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills in order to increase rates of progress
- increase the amount of challenge for higher attaining pupils.

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