

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



21 May 2009

Mr Kerridge
Headteacher
St Peter and St Paul, Lincoln's Catholic High School;
A Science College
Western Avenue
Lincoln
Lincolnshire
LN6 7SX

Dear Mr Kerridge

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 and 13 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 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of data, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards are broadly average.

- Students are drawn from a large number of primary schools having experienced a wide range of different geographical experiences. Generally, they join the school with geography skills and knowledge that are below average.

- Most students make broadly satisfactory progress through Key Stage 3. Consequently, by the end of Year 9, the school's data shows standards to be close to national expectations.
- By the end of Key Stage 3, there is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls at the expected level. However, girls achieve significantly better than boys at the higher levels.
- Small numbers of students select to study geography at GCSE. Historically, less able students have opted to study the subject at this level. Although most students make satisfactory progress, standards have been below average in recent years. Here again, girls tend to achieve better than boys.
- Fewer students achieve at the higher levels in both Key Stage 3 and 4.
- Few students opt to study geography at Advanced Level. However, participation in a sixth form partnership enables students to continue their geography studies at an alternative site.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are generally good. Teachers enjoy good relationships with students.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features.

- The quality of teaching and learning is improving. During this visit, several examples of good teaching were observed. These lessons were well planned and engaged students because they were interesting and interactive.
- Resources were used well to support students' learning. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, students were able to test a variety of rocks to determine their properties and suitability to make a statue for the school grounds.
- A range of assessment for learning techniques was observed. When used well, these effectively promote interest, collaboration and participation. Most teachers use good questioning techniques which help increase student engagement and extend their thinking. However, plenaries were less successful because insufficient time was provided for learning to be summarised or evaluated effectively.
- Good support from teaching assistants helps those students with learning difficulties to participate fully in lessons.
- Scrutiny of books shows that work is sometimes similar for all students. Occasionally, some work presented to those with lower ability was too difficult. Consequently they struggled to complete it independently. The same task did not always provide sufficient challenge for the higher attaining students.
- Presentation of work is variable. Many students take pride in their efforts, but careless punctuation, mistakes and untidy presentation spoils some work.
- The quality of marking and assessment has improved significantly in recent months. Students' work is marked promptly and targets for improvement are shared regularly. End of unit assessments provide

students with clear guidance about the levels they are working at and what they need to do next to improve. However, discussion with students shows that whilst some are clear about the level they are working at and what they need to do to get better, many are not.

- Data collected from records of achievement is used effectively to track students' achievements and is increasingly being used to enable interventions when they make less than expected progress.
- Homework is set appropriately and this helps to develop geographical themes and support learning.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. Schemes of work provide suitable coverage from local to global studies. Currently, much of the curriculum at both Key Stage 3 and 4 is content driven and focused on factual coverage.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is being successfully modified in line with current requirements. Interesting topics and themes have been developed. Students are being provided with a firm foundation of understanding and skills in Year 7. Other programmes of study are being systematically refined to increase opportunities for fieldwork and independent enquiry.
- Satisfactory opportunities are provided for students to use information and communication technology (ICT) to develop or extend their geography work. However, on some occasions, students use the internet indiscriminately. For example, some Year 11 presentations were not students' own work or ideas but had been copied from other sources.
- Further ICT development work is planned to integrate and develop the use of geographical information systems to further increase students' skills of map analysis and interpretation.
- A good range of literacy approaches such as diaries, letters and reports are used regularly to support learning in geography.
- Opportunities are not always taken to use field work and real examples within the immediate locality to motivate and inspire students. However, the Year 11 students speak positively of their work in Lincoln and Ilam to study aspects of settlement.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are good.

- This is a rapidly improving department. School leaders, particularly the teacher in charge of humanities, have been decisive in addressing areas of weakness.
- Recent staffing changes, coupled with appropriate internal and external support from the local authority, an Advanced Skills Teacher and the Head

of Department from another school is having a positive benefit on improving teaching and learning.

- Self-evaluation is accurate. A good range of monitoring and evaluation activity has been undertaken. Within this, the geography department has an understanding of strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to improve further. These are incorporated into an appropriate plan of action.
- The main teacher of geography has attended relevant training and has a good understanding of the issues facing the subject. She is addressing these systematically.

Subject issue

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

- A whole school community cohesion policy to guide the work of the department has been completed and explicit links are made to the geography scheme of work.
- An appropriate range of opportunities is provided throughout the school to learn about local, European and global issues. However, the impact of this work on students' understanding and attitudes has yet to be undertaken and evaluated.
- A broad range of associated geography work is undertaken. The school's recent 'Conscience Week' focused student attention on sustainable living. This consolidated their learning on the need to reduce, reuse and recycle. Environmental awareness has been further developed following a talk to Year 7 students about Hill Holt Woods. Students' awareness of global issues has also been raised by visiting the exhibition at Lincolnshire's sustainable school's showcase.
- In the main, students enjoy good relationships with teachers and each other. Most students are appropriately engaged in their learning. They value each other and relationships between learners from different backgrounds are positive.

Areas for improvement

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

- further raise standards in Key Stages 3 and 4, especially at the higher levels
- continue to develop and implement the new Key Stage 3 and 4 schemes of work
- increase fieldwork opportunities so that students are provided regularly with first hand opportunities to support the curriculum and increase their geographical skills
- develop the use of ICT, particularly geographical information systems to enable better analysis and interpretation of map information by students.

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