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Mr J Dreher  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Dreher

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography 2009/10

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 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 observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both satisfactory.

- Secure geography skills are being developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children have an appropriate play based curriculum which soundly develops their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Children's learning is supported by an appropriate range of indoor and outdoor activities. For example, children explored the school grounds to

look for different mini-beast habitats and they were able locate them onto a map. They have also compared and contrasted their environment following their visit to Birches Valley to explore a woodland region.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 to achieve broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. They are able to design and interpret simple maps and know that they can get to different places in a variety of ways. They are able to identify and describe what Doxey is like following their walk around the locality. They have also undertaken a local traffic survey. They are able to describe and understand physical and human features of places. Pupils also understand that the world extends beyond their locality following their study of the seaside and the island of Coll.
- Work is suitably developed in Years 3 and 4. Studies of settlements and rainforests, in particular, are taught in sufficient detail.
- By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. Pupils from Year 5 onwards develop their enquiry skills satisfactorily and suitably develop their research skills. They have a secure understanding of environmental change and sustainable development.
- Pupils' 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 is satisfactory.

- Lessons observed on this visit were well planned with a good range of resources provided to generate engagement. Consequently, pupils were interested in their work.
- A good range of questions involved pupils in their learning and they worked well together in a variety of ways.
- Teachers make satisfactory use of information and communication technology (ICT) and visual resources to support lessons.
- As pupils progress through the school they increase their confidence in using ICT. For example, as part of their independent research of a local or global environmental issue of their choice, Year 6 pupils were able to identify a range of areas for investigation. They then used search engines and their subsequent findings to refine lines of enquiry. They were able to record their findings in a variety of ways including using video cameras to share the outcomes with their classmates.
- Lessons were less effective when pupils were seated for too long, geographical terms were not explained clearly enough and there were insufficient prompts such as key geographical vocabulary to support their writing.
- A new assessment system has been introduced but is at an early stage of implementation. Although skills-based, the current approach does not clarify precisely enough how skills such as mapwork, fieldwork or research are developed sequentially. As a result, these areas are not built on progressively in the planned units.

- Work is marked regularly and some pieces such as the comparison of Mim in Ghana with Stafford have been thoroughly evaluated. However, marking rarely gives pupils an indication of what they need to do next to improve.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- In the main, the geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance.
- A good start has been made by the curriculum managers and staff to develop a key skills approach to the subject. Appropriate reference has been made to the national curriculum in constructing schemes of work.
- However, some units do not allow pupils to study aspects in sufficient depth. Consequently, they have only a basic knowledge and understanding of places and significant environments beyond the United Kingdom.
- There are appropriate curriculum links with other subjects such as English, mathematics and history. For example, as part of their study of chocolate, pupils are able to compare the incomes of Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade farmers and report the differences this makes to their standard of living.
- 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. The 'Keen to be Green' theme is enjoyed by the older pupils. Through their Eco-School's work, pupils have a good awareness of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Fieldwork is satisfactory. Experiences around the school, Doxey, The Potteries Museum and 'The Palms' at Stapeley Water Garden are enjoyed by pupils. These first hand experiences help bring the subject to life and promote enjoyment and interest. In addition, they also help pupils develop their personal and social skills well.
- Although a number of other visits are made, geography links are not always taken to increase pupils' understanding of place and location.

### Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- There have been several staff changes in subject leadership in the past three years.
- Curriculum managers have devised and introduced work on key skills in consultation with the staff. An evaluation of geography topics is scheduled and it is intended to use the outcomes to make further revisions to themes and schemes of work.

- The subject leader's file is detailed. Priorities for development are appropriate and accurate, although the review section needs to specify outcomes and next steps more precisely.
- The geography policy 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 curriculum leader does not have a precise view of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject, particularly in teaching and learning. However, this is being remedied and plans are in place for this to be addressed.
- Curriculum leaders have attended relevant training to help them further improve and develop the subject. Staff have also received in-school training to support them in the development of their key skills work.

### Subject issue

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

- The school has a whole-school community cohesion policy but it is not identified explicitly within the 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 satisfactorily broaden pupils' understanding of the world beyond Doxey.
- 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
- ensure that the assessment system builds pupils' key geographical skills sequentially, effectively tracks pupils' achievement and helps receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills in order to increase rates of progress
- monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and achievement and standards in order to use the outcomes to raise standards further.

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