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Ms Keen  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Keen

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography 2009/10

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both good.

- Standards and achievement are especially good in the early Foundation Stage where exploration is fully encouraged and in Year 6 where pupils debate issues well.
- Pupils have good recall of geographical vocabulary and are able to locate a variety of places and recognise geographical features.
- Pupils mostly develop skills well. From the nursery onwards they use globes and a variety of maps. By the end of Year 6 pupils use these

confidently and improve their map skills by orienteering during their residential experience.

- There are opportunities for pupils to develop fieldwork skills in all year groups. They collect first hand data such as in work related to the school travel plan and consequently have good spatial awareness.
- Pupils have good knowledge of the places they study including coastal towns in Key Stage 1 and the Scottish Islands in Key Stage 2.
- They also have good knowledge of topical events such as the bush fires in Australia.
- Pupils are keen to answer questions in lessons and relationships with teachers and their peers are positive. This includes a very positive and inclusive attitude to pupils with disabilities.

### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching and learning in geography is good.

- Teaching of geography is good with a clear focus on enquiry and debate as well as on the environment. Pupils have good opportunities to think geographically.
- Two year groups have virtual learning environments with good links to a wide variety of geography work which they can access from home or school. Pupils are encouraged to add their own comments to their weather forecasts and other virtual work.
- Teachers confidently adapt the work planned as needed and use a good range of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their work and stimulate interest.
- The range of approaches used is good with some especially well adapted work on coordinates seen for pupils in wheel chairs.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop geographical enquiry. This was observed both in a hotly contested debate about the proposed introduction of wind farms and in relation to a dramatic presentation in assembly about a community threatened by developers in India.
- Pupils enjoy working in pairs and supporting each others ideas they work well collaboratively to discuss issues and solve problems such as the nature of land use in Horton Kirby.
- Pupils are well prepared for learning outside the classroom; they have residential experiences in two year groups. These are well structured to enable them to progressively develop their understanding of rural geography.
- Work is marked regularly and follows the school's mark scheme. Pupils are assessed systematically at the end of units and their progress is carefully tracked as they move up the school.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and it is currently under full review; there are good signs of more imaginative strands developing.

- The curriculum is a 'work in progress' as the new leadership team are currently developing a more thematic and cross-curricular approach.
- At present, there is a strong reliance on the QCA units of work although these have been progressively adapted to the pupils' needs. As a result pupils' progress builds well although there maybe a slight gap in map skills in later Key Stage 2. A good range of topics are covered.
- Pupils know about topical issues and these are often a focus of displays and drama. Pupils develop a good understanding of environmental issues and have been commended by the local authority on their work.
- There are sufficient opportunities at Key Stage 1 for pupils to use the local area and to compare it with a rural and seaside area. They understand some characteristics of the physical and human world in England.
- The visit of an urban fox to their vegetable pots also showed them that the city has some surprising commonalities with more rural areas.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils' complete fieldwork linked to their study of a river and there are plans to develop this further by utilising and example from the local area around the school.

## Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory overall.

- The subject has had an interim leader this year. He has drafted the new policy and maintained provision while the new appointments, at a senior level, have become established within the school.
- You and your senior team have recently begun to lead the development of a new curriculum with some good advances in the virtual learning environment and its use in geography.
- The overall learning environment in the school is beautifully maintained and pupils' work in geography is fully celebrated.
- Curriculum coverage is monitored but there is less evidence that action has been taken where there are minor gaps such as in pupils' map skills.
- Self-evaluation is satisfactory but currently lacks the rigour necessary to fully inform future improvements in the subject. Insufficient use has been made of the support, training and guidance provided by the subject associations.
- Resources are good for the teaching of geographical skills. They are excellent in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Subject issue

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

- Pupils are aware of the wider world and they gain from sharing other pupil's personal experience of various cultures.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about and debate controversial issues.
- There are as yet limited comments in the geography curriculum showing how pupils will be encouraged to develop an understanding that they live in a complex and diverse world. In practice pupils are well aware of the needs of others.
- Pupils avoid stereotyping places and peoples and are for example, aware of the various levels of prosperity in a city like Mumbai.
- Pupils enjoy working collaboratively and have positive attitudes to one other; they are exceptionally inclusive and welcoming.
- The whole school community including parents enjoy an annual trip to the seaside where they experience a contrasting community first hand.

## Areas for improvement

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

- ensure that the revised curriculum builds on the good foundation of geographical skills already present to enable pupils to develop more personalised and independent approaches
- incorporate more written detail in policy documents showing how geography can contribute to pupils' understanding of community cohesion
- monitor provision more rigorously to further inform self evaluation and support planning for improvement in geography.

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

Mo Roberts  
Her Majesty's Inspector