

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



7 October 2009

Miss M Haggerty
Headteacher
Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School
Common Edge Road
Blackpool
Lancashire
FY4 5DF

Dear Miss Haggerty

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit, on 28 September 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 focused on how effectively geography teaching and the curriculum promote 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; learning walks around the school; and the observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement is good and standards are in line with national expectations.

- Pupils make good progress in gaining geographical knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children get off to a good start in geography. Carefully-designed, first-hand activities use the internal and external environment well to ensure children begin to gain knowledge and

understanding of the world. Assessment data show that children make very good progress in their learning from low starting points.

- In Year 1, pupils study their local environment through locality walks. These build on the good foundations experienced in Reception, allowing pupils to develop their observational and recording skills and to look at a real local issue, such as road safety and how it can be improved.
- More distant places are studied in Year 2, where locality studies in the United Kingdom and Mexico are used well to introduce pupils to a range of secondary evidence, including reference books, maps and plans, photographs and information and communication technology (ICT).
- At Key Stage 2, geography-led topics are taught in half-termly blocks which provide pupils with the opportunity for sustained work. Pupils develop a good understanding of different places and the relationship between human, physical and environmental issues. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils investigated the significance of the River Nile for life in Egypt.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reach good levels of understanding because of good teaching, good relationships and the range of geographical activities they experience. They develop positive values and attitudes to people and places and become confident and independent learners, with a range of geographical enquiry skills.
- Pupils are polite, welcoming and well behaved. They enjoy working together and are enthusiastic about learning in geography.

Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers have good generic teaching skills and understand what constitutes good learning in geography.
- All of the geography teaching observed during the visit was good.
- Teachers used questioning to good effect to check on learning. They demonstrated good subject knowledge and were enthusiastic about the content they were teaching in geography lessons.
- Pupils of all ages have the opportunity to work both independently and collaboratively. They conduct their own geographical investigations, ask their own questions and then research their answers. They share their findings and opinions well with each other.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to provide a range of appropriate and enjoyable geographical experiences.
- Planning for geography units of work is more variable. The best unit planning structures learning and the acquisition of skills through a series of key enquiry questions which ensure appropriate progression from lesson to lesson for all pupils.

- A range of resources, including ICT, was used to good effect in geography lessons.
- School leaders know that there is a need to improve assessment. Pupils' work is regularly marked and commented upon. Teacher assessment is undertaken at the end of each unit of work to identify which pupils are making expected, less than expected and more than expected progress.
- Assessment information is used effectively by teachers to evaluate the units of work, suggest improvements for the following year and identify additional learning experiences needed by pupils in geography. However, this information is not currently used to compare the standards of work with national expectations or to inform reports to parents.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Geography topics are chosen well to motivate and interest pupils.
- The recent emphasis on literacy across the curriculum and developing progression in geographical skills is motivating pupils and giving them the necessary skills to access the geography curriculum.
- The development of thinking and enquiry skills is integral to the geography curriculum. However, pupils' knowledge of where places are and their awareness of geography-related topical issues is less secure.
- All groups of pupils have equal access to the curriculum through a range of well-designed, differentiated activities and the support provided by teaching assistants for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers are working hard to provide increasing levels of challenge for higher achieving pupils.
- The curriculum is flexible and responsive and is constantly reviewed and enhanced. This ensures that all pupils can participate in available opportunities. Good use is made of visits and visitors to learn more about other cultures and places. Examples include an African drumming performance by pupils at a local theatre.
- Pupils are actively involved in projects based on local issues and improvements to their own environment. The school council has designed new play areas and members of the gardening club have successfully grown flowers, fruit and vegetables. The school is involved in local recycling initiatives and pupils in Year 5 act as 'Eco warriors' for the school.
- Good provision of memorable first and second-hand learning experiences ensures pupils have the opportunity to compare attitudes and values and experience a range of places and cultures.
- The school's mission statement and ethos underpin the geography curriculum. Pupils have a good understanding of sustainability and diversity issues. They take responsible action to help others by raising

money to support communities in different parts of the world. This includes support for an orphanage in Malawi.

- The school is aware of the need to develop greater pupil knowledge and understanding of the geography of the United Kingdom and Europe. The European dimension is underdeveloped but 'modern foreign language days' are beginning to provide more opportunities to develop this aspect of the curriculum.
- High-quality displays around the school are used well to celebrate pupils' growing knowledge and understanding of the world.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- Subject leaders play an effective role in the monitoring and evaluation of geography in the school. Accurate annual self evaluation is used to identify strengths and priorities for development.
- The school is continuously striving to improve the quality of geography.
- There is a good geography policy that has clear aims and identifies the main teaching, learning and assessment intentions.
- Action has been taken to improve progression by reviewing curriculum units and placing a greater emphasis on the development of pupils' skills. This is already beginning to have a positive impact on the standard of geographical work in the school.
- Subject association membership, attendance at professional development courses in a neighbouring local authority and good links with the local Geographical Association champion are used effectively to enhance practice in the school.
- Leaders within the school actively promote the links between teaching, learning, the curriculum and community cohesion.
- The school demonstrates a good capacity to continue to improve its work in geography.

Subject issue

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

- Community cohesion is embedded in school life and promoted well through the geography curriculum.
- The school places great emphasis on the importance of diversity and inclusion at a school, local and global scale. In geography lessons, pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of local and global issues and gain a good appreciation of their role as local and global citizens. However, there are too few opportunities for them to develop an

understanding of communities in different parts of the United Kingdom and in Europe.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils develop a greater knowledge and understanding of the geography of the United Kingdom and Europe
- improving pupils' knowledge of where places are and promoting their awareness of topical issues relating to geography
- refining teachers' unit planning to provide appropriate progression from lesson to lesson for all pupils
- developing an assessment portfolio of pupils' work, annotated against the National Curriculum levels, to provide detailed evidence of geographical attainment and progress.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector