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Mrs L Simpson  
Headteacher  
Clapgate Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Simpson

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 9 November 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of data; analysis of students' work; learning walks around the school and observations of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement in geography

Achievement is satisfactory overall.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress from starting points that are well below national expectations. They attain standards in geography that remain below the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence currently indicates progress is satisfactory.
- Pupils develop appropriate mapwork and locational skills and have a good understanding of the similarities and differences between different places at a variety of scales: local, national and global.

- Geography lessons are used well to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills but some pupils have great difficulty recording their findings in writing.
- Geography contributes well to pupils' personal development. There is a strong emphasis on paired and collaborative working. Pupils are happy to express their views and opinions and say they enjoy finding out about different places and environmental issues in geography.

### Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good generic teaching skills and understand what constitutes good learning in geography. Lessons are carefully planned and structured around appropriate learning objectives and key geographical questions.
- All of the geography teaching observed during the visit was good. However, evidence from pupils' work and discussion with them confirm that this is satisfactory overall.
- Pupils are polite and well behaved and engage happily in a variety of motivating paired and group learning activities in geography lessons. They conduct their own geographical investigations and share their findings and opinions well with each other.
- All groups of pupils have equal access to the curriculum through a range of 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 to maximise learning and raise attainment in geography. However, insufficient use is currently made of assessment information to inform teachers' planning and ensure tasks are pitched at the right level to meet individual learning needs.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked but marking does not consistently identify specifically how they can improve their learning in geography.
- Assessment records summarise pupils' geographical experiences and grade work in relation to national curriculum levels. Subject leaders are aware of the need to develop teachers' confidence in accurately levelling and recording pupils' progress and attainment in geography.

### Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has worked hard in conjunction with a local cluster of primary schools to develop a broad geography curriculum, using a topic approach across a two-year cycle. However, opportunities to check on the progressive development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum have been missed.

- Good use is made of visits to enhance pupils' understanding of rural and seaside environments which contrast well with their own locality. Less effective use is made of visitors to the school to enrich the geography curriculum.
- The geography curriculum is not yet linked closely enough to complementary whole-school thematic days on global awareness and environmental issues.
- Classroom displays are used well to celebrate the curriculum and pupils' developing knowledge and understanding of the world.
- The school has a range of appropriate geographical resources and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning in geography.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good and shows good capacity for further improvement.

- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and have a clearly defined role in the monitoring and evaluation of geography throughout the school.
- A start has been made on using the support and resources available from the subject associations to improve provision in geography.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and is based on a good range of activities, including: examination of teachers' planning; the use of data; scrutiny of work; consideration of pupils' views and lesson observations.
- There is a detailed awareness of strengths and areas for development and a realistic action plan to tackle the weaknesses in provision has been produced.

### Subject issue

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

- There is a lack of strategic planning for the development of community cohesion through the geography curriculum.
- The school is a welcoming and inclusive community with a strong emphasis on care. This is clearly demonstrated in geography lessons by the positive attitudes of the pupils and the way in which they support each other in their learning.
- The school places a good emphasis on the importance of diversity and inclusion at a school, local and global scale. Geography helps pupils to have a good understanding of their school and local community. This enables them to make appropriate comparisons with a variety of other places.

- Geography encourages pupils to understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens. For example, Year 6 pupils have been actively involved in seeking views about the quality of the local environment and presenting their findings to local councillors.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the level of challenge in lessons to maximise learning in geography
- improving the consistency of feedback on pupils' written work to ensure it informs them how to improve their work in geography
- enhancing the formal assessment of pupils' progress in geography by creating a portfolio of levelled work to exemplify best practice in teacher assessment
- reviewing the curriculum to ensure there is appropriate progression in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and that the geography curriculum makes an effective contribution to community cohesion.

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

Angela Milner  
Her Majesty's Inspector