

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



22 February 2010

Mrs C Nicholls  
Headteacher  
The Burgate School and Sixth Form Centre  
Salisbury Road  
Fordingbridge  
Hampshire  
SP6 1EZ

Dear Mrs Nicholls

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 February 2010 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 students' work and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

#### Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form.

- Students' attainment at GCSE in 2009 was above average, continuing the pattern of the last four years. All students attained a GCSE grade with the large majority awarded grades A\* to C. Given their starting points, this represents good progress.
- Attainment at A level is high and students make outstanding progress. In three of the last four years, the large majority of students attained A or B grades.

- There is little difference in the progress made by different groups of students. Where this has been apparent in the past, the department acted effectively to resolve this.
- In lessons, students make good progress demonstrating a good understanding of physical processes and the issues relating to interdependence and sustainability. Most students meet or exceed the targets set for them.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is excellent and they enjoy learning geography. This is reflected in the high numbers who choose to study geography at both GCSE and A-level.

### Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan carefully structured lessons. They manage learning effectively by engaging students in the process. Students value how geography is taught, in particular the way teachers explain the work.
- Teachers use a good range of teaching and learning activities including pair work and role-play, and students particularly enjoy the opportunity to be involved actively in their learning. There are too few opportunities in the main school for students to take responsibility for their own work.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support teaching but is used insufficiently for learning.
- Students' work is marked regularly. Teachers write detailed comments, including points for improvement, on the formal assessments in Key Stage 3 and examination answers at GCSE and A level.
- GCSE and A-level students have a good awareness of their targets and know what they must do to improve their work. This is less so in Years 7 to 9.

### Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced and the department has reviewed this against the new requirements. A number of contemporary topics are taught and there is a good focus on concepts such as development. There is a good scheme of work in place with detailed lesson plans available for all staff.
- The department is very familiar with, and confident in delivering, the GCSE and A-level specifications. They react quickly to any changes required in the examinations and adapt their practice accordingly.
- There are fieldwork opportunities in all years that enrich the curriculum. Students enjoy these visits and are aware of how they develop their understanding in real environments of work completed in lessons. The department's approach to fieldwork is inclusive.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- The head of geography has a clear vision for the subject and leads the department very effectively. He knows the strengths of the department and the aspects requiring improvement. Capacity for further improvement is good.
- The geography staff are a very effective team with complementary knowledge and experience that is used to good effect. They are all committed to improving each student's experience of geography.
- There is regular monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department, including a detailed analysis of examination results, scrutiny of students' work as well as lesson observations.
- The department makes good use of the professional development opportunities available, especially those relating to examination courses. It also makes good use of subject networks.
- Geography plays a major role in the humanities specialism and is leading on key aspects, such as the development of homework.
- Students' views are sought on a regular basis and the outcomes are fed back into the department's planning cycle.

## Subject issue

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

- The geography staff have a good understanding of how the subject contributes to community cohesion.
- The geography curriculum provides a good range of relevant issues for students to investigate that relate to development, diversity and sustainability, alongside the study of places.
- The department's direct links with international schools provide good opportunities for learning about other places and the United Kingdom's interdependence with them.
- Students have a good understanding of their place in the world and demonstrate empathy for those from different cultures.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing students, in the main school, with more opportunities for independent learning so that they have greater responsibility for directing their own studies
- increasing the use of information and communication technology, especially geographic information systems, in learning
- ensuring that all students in Key Stage 3 know their targets and what they have to do improve their work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop geography in the school.

As I explained previously, 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 your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Dowgill  
Additional Inspector