

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)



18 March 2010

Mr N O'Boyle  
Headteacher  
Westbourne Primary School  
River Street  
Westbourne  
Emsworth  
PO10 8TG

Dear Mr O'Boyle

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit, with Sean Hanan HMI, on 11 March 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is inadequate.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is inadequate overall.

- Across both key stages, pupils make inadequate progress in their geographical learning. On many occasions, the work they produce is below standards expected for their age.
- Often, there is a lack of depth to pupils' understanding about places and skills, such as map skills, are often repeated rather than developed during later stages in their learning.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils benefit from regular exposure to the outdoor environment to enable them to develop basic observation skills.
- Pupils' understanding of geography in the lower school is very confused, with experiences being frequently related to history and science rather than to geography.
- At Key Stage 2, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work revealed that experiences of the subject vary across classes. Lessons do not support the progressive development of geographical skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Work often occupies pupils rather than challenging their thinking. More able pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to show what they can achieve and are rarely stretched by whole-class tasks.
- Weak literacy skills inhibit the progress of a majority of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2. When extended written work is set, pupils often copy or transfer it from other sources rather than developing reasoned or analytical writing. Written responses are often basic and lack depth of thought, for example when they were attempting to compare Chichester with Westbourne.
- Pupils are responsive and enthusiastic in lessons. They enjoy working collaboratively and are supportive of each other. Relationships in lessons are very positive.

#### Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching of geography is inadequate overall.

- Teachers have good generic teaching skills. They develop good relationships with their pupils, have good classroom management strategies and use a wide range of teaching approaches. However, they are less secure in applying these effectively to teaching geography. As a result, geographical outcomes for pupils are often weak and inconsistent.
- Good teaching was observed during the inspection. However, pupils' work showed that, although there were episodes of effective practice, there was, too often, an emphasis on low-level tasks which did not sequence learning progressively. This indicated that teachers were not using geographical resources effectively or confidently enough to meet the needs of pupils, especially the more able.
- Research tasks often lack focus, with pupils merely copying material or downloading information from the internet related to a broad geographical topic without really understanding the purpose. This does not promote geographical understanding.
- The use of new technology to support learning in geography varies across classes and lessons. At its best, resources such as Google Earth were used to engage pupils' interest. On other occasions, opportunities were missed, for example, to project maps to aid exemplification and clarification.

- Pupils' progress in geography is not assessed or monitored regularly. Pupils are unaware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school has acknowledged that this is an area that needs some development.
- Work is marked on a regular basis, but comments generally refer to presentation, spelling or grammar rather than geographical outcomes.

### Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is inadequate.

- There is a broad integrated curriculum structure in place, based on the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage six areas of learning. In theory, this ensures statutory coverage of geography. In reality there is no clarity, progression or depth to the geography in this learning programme.
- Teachers are not sufficiently secure in the subject to be able to interpret the outline curriculum ideas provided to ensure that high-quality geographical learning experiences are interwoven into the topics. As a result, many units do not provide a clear and sequential structure which would enable pupils to develop and improve their geographical knowledge and understanding.
- Geography often provides a context for learning in other areas. As a result, opportunities to develop quality geographical learning are rarely fully exploited.
- Units which have a more specific geographical focus such as the units on 'India', 'Location, location, location' or 'Water' have some episodes of good geography provision. However, the skills and understanding introduced in these units are not built on and consolidated in following work, resulting in a fragmented experience for most pupils.
- Where geography is identified in the learning programme, there is often a greater focus on skills rather than knowledge and understanding. Focusing on skills limits geographical learning and especially higher order thinking.
- Pupils have some limited opportunities to complete geographical fieldwork, for example during their study of the river Ems. However, often this lacks a clear structure and the fieldwork skills used are not consolidated in lessons or further outdoor experiences. Frequently, visits to locations such as Chichester are used to support learning in history or religious education rather than geography.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is inadequate.

- The subject has not been organised or managed sufficiently to provide effective support for non-specialist teachers.
- Monitoring procedures are informal and not sufficiently rigorous to identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject or to support improvements in provision in geography.

- Currently, there is no cohesive strategy for improving the subject. The development points in the current subject plan are basic and list several desired improvements without specifying how these are to be achieved or resourced.
- Very limited subject-specific support or professional development have been available in recent years to improve teachers' expertise. There are plans to make more effective use of the geography champions' network and the resources and support offered by the subject associations, to improve provision in the subject, but these are at an early stage of development.

### Subject issue

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

- The limitations of the geography curriculum mean that it does not support the promotion of community cohesion well in terms of progressively developing pupils' awareness and understanding of aspects such as diversity, interdependence or their role as European and World citizens.
- There is only a limited and fragmented focus on real and relevant issues in the locality or further away, linked to poverty, equality, exploitation or development for example. On those occasions where these issues are explored in more detail, such as in the lesson on Mumbai, pupils are engaged by the content and intrigued by the real or possible impact on people's lives.
- Too often, there is an overemphasis on 'cultural' aspects of a country or place rather than the geography of that location. There is a danger that this emphasises the exotic and reinforces stereotypes, rather than providing a balanced perspective.
- Links with schools abroad, such as in Tenerife, are not currently being used effectively through the geography curriculum to provide pupils with a balanced view of a contrasting locality and help develop a better understanding of the world around them.
- Positive relationships in lessons promote a culture of care and cooperation.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making use of the support and resources provided by the subject associations and the local authority to improve provision in the classroom, as well as to develop non-specialists' geographical expertise
- reviewing the curriculum to incorporate more specific high-quality geography experiences which will engage pupils and develop their geographical knowledge and understanding
- monitoring geographical provision more rigorously to identify and share good practice, and to develop aspects which are weaker.

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

Leszek Iwaskow  
Her Majesty's Inspector