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Ms S Fielden
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Fielden

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 14 May 2010 to look at work in geography.

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 data; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of parts of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is outstanding.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is outstanding.

- Pupils' geographical knowledge, skills and understanding are excellent. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is above what is usually expected for their age. Their locational knowledge is particularly strong.
- All pupils make rapid progress in learning because they have good opportunities to make links with prior and future learning.
- Pupils have excellent speaking and listening skills. They can explain geographical concepts in detail, express their opinions coherently and pose their own well-considered geographical questions.
- Pupils are reflective and are aware of the need to combat stereotypical views.

- Pupils have good information and communication technology skills and have inventive opportunities to use these in lessons to promote their independent learning skills.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent. They enjoy geography as a result of positive relationships and the many opportunities they have for active learning and decision-making.

Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching is good overall but with some outstanding features.

- Teachers plan lessons well to include a clear focus on learning outcomes. They employ a wide range of teaching and learning activities which they match well to pupils' varied learning preferences.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables them to give clear explanations. They have the confidence to raise complex and controversial issues for pupils to investigate.
- Teachers know their pupils well and provide good individual support. However, they do not consistently use this knowledge to match learning tasks and resources to pupils' individual learning needs.
- Teachers are adept at setting learning in relevant contexts for pupils and building learning up from pupils' own experiences.
- At the end of lessons, teachers use geographical questions well to check pupils' understanding of the learning objectives. However, they make less frequent use of checks on pupils' learning at different points in the lesson.
- Questions are often targeted at individual pupils. However, not all teachers consistently probe pupils' understanding to develop their learning.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and helpfully but it is not consistently developmental. Pupils do not have a good awareness of how well they are doing in geography or what their next steps in learning should be.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- Pupils learn through exciting and relevant topics. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to investigate topical issues in the news. Geography-specific themed days enrich learning.
- Within topics, very good attention is given to all aspects of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills and their progressive development is planned.
- The curriculum provides many opportunities to develop pupils' creativity. Visitors are used well to spark pupils' interests.
- There are good opportunities for fieldwork across all phases of the school. Excellent use is made of outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is built on well in each year group so that pupils have

appropriate learning opportunities in the school grounds, the local area and wider region.

- The curriculum gives excellent attention to environmental issues and sustainable development; it actively promotes opportunities for pupils' decision making.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- The subject leader monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of geography well by making regular checks on teachers' planning, talking to pupils and scrutinising their work.
- Thematic plans meet pupils' needs very well. They are well structured, progressive and consistently implemented by all teachers.
- The subject leader monitors pupils' progress against National Curriculum expectations and encourages staff to record more detailed information about pupils' strengths and areas for development in geography.
- Resources are up to date and relevant. Particularly good use is made of electronic resources.
- The subject leader is highly enthusiastic and well informed. Her positivity helps improve the confidence of other teachers and this ethos of encouragement supports the sharing of best practice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using subject evaluations to direct future monitoring and inform action planning
- using assessment data more effectively to improve teaching and learning and evaluate the effectiveness of provision.

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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Sonya Williamson
Her Majesty's Inspector