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Mr M Atkins
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Atkins

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 29 June 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of two lessons; and a learning walk throughout the school.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is satisfactory.

- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of knowledge and understanding of the world below that found typically for most four-year-olds. Some enter with levels well below those found typically.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school to reach standards that are just below average. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, they make good progress. However, not enough pupils reach the higher levels of which they are capable by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils' knowledge of the different locations studied is developing satisfactorily. Some pupils have good knowledge of where localities and features are globally placed and what it is like to live there. However,

some pupils mix up countries and continents when describing the location of different geographical landscapes.

- Pupils' good behaviour contributes to the quality of learning observed in lessons. They work well in groups and cooperate fully with their teachers.

Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory with some good features.

- The lessons observed provided suitable challenge to pupils. They were brisk and focused and engaged pupils well through their practical and interactive approach. Pupils say they enjoy their geography lessons.
- Older pupils are particularly skilled at asking geographical questions. For example, they were able to prepare successfully for a fieldwork river study by initiating questions to investigate how a river carries its load and how it creates its channel. Group discussions based on good-quality images on an interactive whiteboard supported their learning well.
- All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are able to engage in lessons as a result of the effective support from teaching assistants.
- Evidence from pupils' workbooks shows that tasks planned for higher ability pupils do not provide enough challenge. With less support, they often complete the same work as other pupils.
- Sometimes assessment information is used to inform teachers about pupils' performance and to influence their planning. However, assessment data are not used routinely to plan lessons or curriculum units to accurately meet the needs of all pupils.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and provide good oral feedback to pupils to improve their learning in lessons. However, marking in pupils' workbooks is of variable quality. Some good marking develops geographical thinking but this is currently inconsistent across the school.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and promotes the progression of geographical skills, knowledge and understanding satisfactorily. It is matched adequately to pupils' needs and the school recognises that future curriculum development should enthuse pupils with more imaginative and exciting experiences.
- Links to other subjects are developing well. Literacy is served particularly well by geography where it provides a suitable context for learning.
- Fieldwork skills are promoted effectively through the range of educational visits. The progression of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, through the various trips across the different age groups, is clear.

- Themed weeks, such as Multicultural Week, contribute well to pupils' understanding of different countries and cultures. They develop a broad understanding of how they are globally placed and what it is like to live in different parts of the world.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of recent global events. For example, they are very clear about the impact of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions on humans but have a limited understanding of why these events occur.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is satisfactory.

- Current expectations bring about satisfactory outcomes for pupils in geography. Targets used are adequately challenging.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders and managers are aware of strengths and weaknesses in geography. An adequate range of monitoring activities identifies appropriate priorities for future development. Recently, data from assessments have been used to identify patterns and trends in achievement but current action planning is not precise enough.
- The school uses its links with the professional associations and a nearby local authority effectively to support staff development in geography and to keep up to date with the latest practice.
- Governors support and challenge the coordinator well. They monitor the provision directly to inform their views and decision-making well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards, particularly for more able pupils, with tasks in lessons accurately matched to their needs
- developing a consistent approach to marking so that it is subject-specific and more helpful to pupils
- developing a wider repertoire of monitoring activities to ensure precision in curricular and action planning
- improving pupils' locational knowledge.

I hope that 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

Liam Trippier
Her Majesty's Inspector