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Mrs S Brindley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brindley

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 28 February 2011 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 you and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of parts of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is satisfactory.

- Children increase their knowledge and understanding of the world securely in the Reception class. Their learning is supported by an appropriate range of indoor and outdoor activities. For instance, children explored the school grounds for signs of spring. A suitable range of other indoor activities, such as jigsaws and opportunities to identify features of different seasons, was provided to support their learning.
- The children have compared and contrasted their environment following a visit to a local woodland region. They also have a sound understanding of different weather types and know how to dress suitably for different weather conditions.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 to attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Pupils are able to design and interpret simple maps and know that they can get to different places in a variety of

ways. They are able to describe features of Church Gresley and have a good understanding of environmental issues.

- Work progresses satisfactorily in Key Stage 2 where themes, such as village life, weather and mapwork are taught in sufficient detail. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average.
- Good opportunities are provided, particularly in Year 6, for pupils to develop their enquiry and research skills through their study of mountains and rivers. They have a good understanding of environmental change and sustainable development.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They generally respond well to clear classroom expectations. Relationships between adults and pupils are good.

Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching of geography is satisfactory.

- During the visit, most lessons were well planned. Teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) well to support pupils' learning. In the best lessons, there was a brisk pace to learning and resources were used well to stimulate pupils' interest and engagement.
- On occasions, when teachers talked for too long or when some activities were too complex or challenging and questions, although widely distributed, did not sufficiently challenge pupils' thinking, pupils made only satisfactory progress.
- Work scrutiny shows that in many classes, pupils, regardless of their ability, do similar work. Writing frames and worksheets prevent some, particularly the more able, from achieving higher levels. In addition, coverage of work is less clear in some year groups because recorded evidence was not available or provided.
- Work is marked regularly although next steps are rarely identified. Consequently, pupils do not know what they need to do to improve. Work in assessment books is levelled against the National Curriculum level descriptors but despite this, pupils say that they are unclear about how well they are doing in the subject.
- Summary assessments do not clarify how skills such as mapwork are developed sequentially. Consequently, these are not built on progressively in the planned units; nor are they used by teachers to increase rates of progress by building on what pupils have already learnt. For instance, mapping skills in lower Key Stage 2 are similar to those experienced in Key Stage 1.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is satisfactory.

- In the main, the geography curriculum has suitable breadth and balance. A sound start has been made in revising the curriculum and developing themes that are interesting and enjoyable for pupils.

- Appropriate use has been made of the National Curriculum in constructing the revised schemes of work. However, some units do not currently allow pupils to study aspects in sufficient depth. Consequently, pupils have only a basic knowledge of places and significant environments within, and beyond the United Kingdom.
- A satisfactory range of opportunities is provided to explore the local community but school leaders recognise that pupils' knowledge and understanding of different communities in the United Kingdom are underdeveloped and require improvement.
- Curriculum links with other subjects such as English, French and ICT are appropriate. For example, in their study of mountains and rivers, pupils have used the internet for research and used ICT to present their information in a variety of interesting ways.
- The school places a strong emphasis on increasing pupils' understanding of environmental and sustainable development issues, such as through the fairtrade day. Through their Eco-schools work, pupils have a good understanding of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Fieldwork is barely satisfactory. Although the local area is visited on a number of occasions, opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of themes by visiting places first hand are not routinely taken. Therefore, pupils' understanding of place and location is underdeveloped.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is satisfactory.

- You have recently assumed responsibility for the subject. The subject policy has recently been revised. An accurate action plan has been developed with clear links to the school's improvement plan. Priorities for improvement are appropriate and accurate.
- Understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject is at an early stage because there have been few opportunities to monitor and evaluate the subject.
- Few opportunities have been provided for staff to undertake subject-specific training to increase their understanding of current issues in geography. Limited use has been made of the support provided by subject associations.
- Recent investment in resources, such as the purchase of atlases, globes and maps, has replaced those that were old, tired or outdated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing rates of progress by:
 - ensuring that marking identifies precisely what pupils need to do next to improve

- making certain that summary assessments monitor pupils' achievements, helping receiving teachers to build progressively on pupils' skills and knowledge
- continuing to review the curriculum and link subjects together where appropriate to make geography even more interesting, relevant and enjoyable for pupils
- ensuring that there is increased evidence of recorded geography work that securely illustrates coverage of the full range of geography skills
- increasing opportunities for fieldwork and study outside the classroom and beyond the immediate locality:
 - to support geographical learning
 - to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of different communities within the United Kingdom.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector