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Mr R Triggs
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Triggs

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 May 2012 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; and observation of four lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is satisfactory.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to finding out about the world around them due to well-planned provision and highly imaginative first-hand experiences. They reach the standard expected for their age because of the ample opportunities to select from a wide variety of high-quality activities. Their early writing is well stimulated by the exciting role play scenarios; such as that seen on inter-planetary travel. Their information and communication technology (ICT) skills are being developed well.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sound understanding of the local town and they enjoy fieldwork which encourages them to observe and record facts accurately. Their writing and recording skills are well supported by the geography curriculum.

- In early Key Stage 2, pupils make rapid progress in their understanding of map skills and geographical information systems (GIS). Throughout the key stage their understanding of the environment and places around the world develops well. However, their knowledge of places in Europe is somewhat tentative despite the useful links established through the Comenius project.
- In the final years, progress in pupils' geographical skills is patchier. This means that although pupils broadly reach the expected national level they are not yet consistently led towards developing their skills, knowledge and understanding to their fullest potential in the subject.
- Group work is lively and well structured. This, together with good resources and good first-hand experiences, encourages pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject. Behaviour in lessons is good.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory.

- Teaching varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Much teaching is well focused and successful but some is less consistent.
- Strengths include the good amount and variety of fieldwork undertaken by all classes. This also involves the successful reinforcement of mapping skills offered by orienteering during the older pupils' residential experience.
- One outstanding lesson observed offered excellent challenges to pupils of all abilities and encouraged their independence despite the quite difficult GIS work on the local region. The pupils were effectively encouraged to reflect and learn from their successes and failures.
- Less successful elements include: insufficient support for technical vocabulary for a small number new to learning English; overly long or complex explanations at the start of lessons for some younger pupils; and inconsistent application of the marking and assessment policy especially in later Key Stage 2. The overuse of worksheets, on occasions, also potentially restricts what pupils set out to achieve.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is satisfactory.

- You have recently successfully reviewed the geography curriculum and rightly identified some minor gaps and a break in the progression of pupils' skills.
- The recently revised long-term plans now offer the pupils a smoother development of their skills and ensure that the creative topics and themes sufficiently cover all aspects of the geography National Curriculum. This includes good-quality fieldwork.
- The school maintains a strong focus on the environment and sustainability. It successfully encourages pupils to have a broad awareness of both the

physical and human aspects of geography. Pupils are guided effectively to reduce, reuse and recycle items.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is satisfactory.

- The leadership of the subject is in transition following the recent appointment of a new coordinator. Senior leaders have successfully used this to help review and revise the expectations for the subject and to ensure that curriculum coverage in all classes fully meets requirements.
- Some useful generic in-service training on 'skills progression' has been applied to the subject. However, the school does not belong to any subject association and there has been little specific professional development for the subject.
- The school has a clear and honest understanding of the areas which still require development and know that these include a more consistent approach to assessing pupils' progress in the subject across all classes to further drive overall achievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving teaching so that more is consistently good by:
 - having less reliance on worksheets in some classes
 - ensuring that pupils at the start of Key Stage 1 are not confused by overlong or complex teacher talk
 - ensuring that all staff follow the marking policy
 - making sure that the assessment of the subject is rigorous and consistent so that pupils are encouraged to reach their full potential
- making more effective use of the support and resources provided by the subject associations to further encourage staff's professional development.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector