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Dear Mrs Tudor

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 07 February 2008 to look at work in geography.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a focus on the school's response to 'Excellence and Enjoyment' and how this is impacting on provision in geography, particularly in terms of planning and progression.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of data, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards and achievement are both satisfactory.

- Throughout the school most pupils make steady gains in their learning and make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in geography.

- In Reception and Year 1, pupils explore some features of their local environment, are able to draw simple maps and have compared a different locality by visiting Grove Farm.
- By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have developed a satisfactory knowledge of places they have studied. They have developed their field work skills further in the locality by undertaking a traffic survey as part of the school travel plan. They are aware that the world extends beyond their locality through their study of Tanzania, Kenya and Bangladesh as part of the 'Global Eye' theme.
- In Years 3 and 4 pupils increase their understanding of environmental issues and consolidate previously learned skills. They are able to study in some depth the weather and climate. They are able to compare and contrast differing localities with their study of the Tengeru region in Tanzania.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of work they have studied and when given the opportunity can write about them in some detail, using appropriate geographical vocabulary. They can identify confidently the world's continents and oceans. Through their work on natural disasters, they are able to consider the local, national and international implications for people.
- Pupils are keen and interested in their work. Their behaviour is excellent and they respond very well to clear classroom expectations. Relationships between adults and pupils are exceptionally good.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features.

- The lessons observed were well planned and built well on previous work. Good use was made of learning objectives to ensure that pupils clearly understand what they were expected to learn in each lesson. A good variety of teaching and learning approaches were used which were carefully selected to extend pupils' thinking. However, pupils' work shows that this does not always occur in all geography lessons.
- An interesting range of resources was selected to engage pupils. Pupils responded well to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and visual resources which helped bring the subject to life. Pupils reacted well to opportunities to work collaboratively as well as independently.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use appropriate geographical vocabulary.
- Although pupils' work is assessed, the school has rightly identified that teachers do not evaluate how well pupils have achieved key skills. Consequently assessment is not used effectively to build on pupils' prior skills to increase rates of progress.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features.

- The geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. However, less than the recommended time is taught in the school. As a result, some themes are not covered in sufficient depth in some classes. Good cross curricular links particularly in science, physical education (PE) and literacy support the curriculum well.
- Pupils have a very good knowledge of global issues and fully understand their complexity as a result of their Eco-School's work. There is an excellent emphasis on environmental change and sustainable development throughout the school. Issues such as recycling and climate change have been explored thoroughly.
- Good use is made of an appropriate range of ICT resources such as the internet as well as interesting software programmes. These enhance pupils' learning well.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school, Leominster and London are valued highly and contribute positively to the subject and pupils' learning. Pupils' fieldwork skills are satisfactory for their age.
- Interesting geography displays and key vocabulary in classrooms help enhance the planned curriculum and are used appropriately by pupils to promote their learning.
- Resources such as maps, atlases and globes are mainly dated with pupils needing more recent resources to support their work.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic. She is increasing her understanding of the strengths in the subject and those areas which need further development.
- Development of the subject has been limited because the school has addressed other whole-school priorities.
- The school has recently reviewed its policy and self-evaluation has been used to produce an appropriate plan of action designed to bring about further improvement. The school accepts that monitoring and evaluation of geography is at an early stage and requires further development.
- The lack of local subject-specific support or training opportunities has restricted the subject leader from being fully informed about current issues in the subject.

Subject issue

The impact of curriculum planning on progression and the quality of provision in geography is satisfactory.

- Established planning in the long and medium term ensures an appropriate range of geographical enquiry leading to satisfactory progression throughout the school.
- Good links with other subjects have been established, but geography skills to be taught are not identified precisely enough in the school's curriculum map.
- The scrutiny of geography books shows satisfactory progression throughout the school although too much work is differentiated by outcome rather than being targeted at specific groups or individuals.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is good.

- In the lessons observed, well targeted differentiated activities and suitable tasks were provided for most pupils with different learning needs. However, scrutiny of work shows that much of the work set in lessons normally is similar for most pupils. The school knows that higher attaining pupils in particular are not always challenged or extended enough. This prevents them from making good progress.
- Questioning was widely distributed and involved all pupils. Boys and girls had equal access.
- Teaching assistants were well deployed to support individual or groups of pupils so that they could access the full range of learning opportunities. As a result, most pupils with learning difficulties make good progress.
- Involvement by many pupils in the Eco and school councils helps increase their understanding of environmental issues.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- identify key geography skills and use these to make assessments of pupils' work so that receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills and increase rates of progress
- ensure that geography work challenges the higher attaining pupils so that they achieve the higher standards they are capable of
- provide opportunities for the subject leader to monitor and evaluate what is happening in geography and share her findings with staff and governors.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector