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Mrs Curtis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Curtis

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both good.

- The standards pupils attain by the end Key Stage are in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average. Pupils' achievement in geography is good.
- In reception, the school farm is used very effectively to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. They are beginning to

understand aspects of safety when working outside of the classroom and recognise features of their local environment.

- Year 2 pupils are beginning to develop their knowledge of specific places and understand the difference between a continent and a country. They can name and simply describe features of familiar landscapes such as the coast. They are also beginning to develop fieldwork skills such as the measuring and recording of the depth of a pond. They understand what it means to be an Eco School in terms of keeping the environment clean and switching off lights.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can explain the physical processes that lead to the development of coastal features such as a stack and use geographical vocabulary well. They know the differences between different rock types and how they are formed. Pupils are beginning to understand patterns of development and can suggest simple reasons for this. They are also able to link the school's eco status with wider issues. They are able to produce accurate maps using the correct conventions and can describe how to undertake fieldwork such as stream measuring.
- The pupils' attitude towards their learning is excellent. They are keen to be involved in their learning and enjoy geography. Their behaviour both in classrooms and outside is exemplary.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers plan their lessons in considerable detail using the scheme of work as their guide. They set clear learning outcomes that are shared with the pupils. Teachers plan very well for pupils of different abilities, providing a good range of activities to help all of them meet the learning outcomes.
- Teachers are willing to take risks and use a wide range of activities in their teaching with pupils of all ages. The school's approach to thinking skills is used in all years, including reception, and aids greatly pupils' learning. Information technology is used imaginatively to support learning. Teachers' use of questions is effective in engaging the pupils and in both reinforcing and extending their learning.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- The quality of marking is variable. In the best practice, teachers provide detailed comments with good guidance on how pupils can improve their learning of geography.
- A relatively new system of assessment allows teachers to know exactly what National Curriculum level in geography individual pupils are at. This information is beginning to be used to inform planning.
- The school reports for geography are very informative and explain what pupils know, understand and can do.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the geography curriculum is good.

- The school has taken an innovative approach to planning the curriculum. It has constructed a curriculum around a number of themes that include all subjects. Key geographical objectives are identified for most themes and are integrated into the planned work. Cross-curricular links are strong.
- Very good use is made of the school grounds and local field visits to contextualise work in the subject, as well as develop pupils' geographical skills.
- The school's eco status and focus on Fair Trade has helped effectively promote pupils' understanding of local and global issues.
- Display work around the school is vibrant and supports very well the development of pupils' learning. There is a good balance between celebrating pupils' work and providing materials that reinforce teaching and learning.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are outstanding.

- Senior leaders have an excellent grasp of the quality of geography across the school and have a clear focus on improving further achievement and standards. They are driving forward improvements in teaching and the curriculum.
- Senior leaders have a dynamic approach to developing whole-school initiatives that have a clear link to geography. The work of the school in developing its Eco School status, fair trade and global citizenship are strengths in its provision and are understood and appreciated by the pupils.
- The school has undertaken a very thorough audit of teachers' skills and competencies in geography and has constructed a clear programme of professional development as an outcome of this.
- There is a good subject policy in place that is planned for review in the near future.
- Work in geography is monitored regularly as part of the school's ongoing programme. Evaluation of provision in geography has informed the clear and manageable action plan.
- The school is using data about pupils' performance in geography to track how well they are doing and set targets for improvement.

Subject issue

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

- The school has taken on board fully 'Excellence and Enjoyment' and has redesigned the school curriculum to reflect the spirit of this document.
- The thematic curriculum allows for key objectives in geography to be revisited in different years. This form of planning ensures that geography appears in each year and that it becomes progressively more difficult across each key stage. However, key concepts underpinning each theme are not clearly identified and geography's contribution to some themes could be extended.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is good overall.

- Teachers plan lessons well to meet the needs of specific groups and they use teaching assistants effectively to carry out the range of planned activities.
- In the lessons observed, teacher questioning involved all pupils and pupils of different abilities were given opportunities to speak to the whole class.
- The improving use of assessment data is allowing teachers to target activities more effectively to meet pupil needs.

Areas for improvement

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

- identify the key concepts underpinning each curriculum theme and include these when revising each scheme of work
- develop further the geographical input in specific units such as Greeks, Tudors and animals
- identify more clearly the assessment opportunities in geography within each scheme of work.

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 Dowgill
Additional Inspector