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Mr P Chadwick
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Dear Mr Chadwick

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 and 05 March 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 how literacy is being used to enhance learning 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. 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 and pupils' work and the observation of four lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both good.

- Pupils make good progress because of the good curriculum, assessment and teaching, and their standards are above expectations. For example, Year 6 pupils are able to identify the advantages and disadvantages of tourism in mountainous areas, and the more able come to and justify a conclusion.

- Most pupils in Year 8 are working at the expected levels. They know the advantages and disadvantages of globalisation and identify important links between more and less economically developed countries. Year 7 pupils explain the climatic variations within Britain by writing a letter to an imaginary elderly person who is deciding where to live.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and they have excellent attitudes to learning. For example, pupils were very good at contributing to the success criteria for a piece of writing they were about to carry out on globalisation. They assess each other's work sympathetically and well.

Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding features.

- Common strengths of teaching include sharing with pupils clear learning objectives and how they will know that they have achieved these. A good variety of learning activities are used in lessons including drama, role play and debates.
- In outstanding lessons on globalisation, the very well structured activities encouraged a brisk pace. Learning activities were challenging for pupils who achieved a great deal. Excellent use of the interactive whiteboard provided a wide range of interesting resources that the pupils found engaging. Pupils had very good opportunities to use their literacy skills.
- Assessment is good with some outstanding features. Pupils' skills of assessing their own and other pupils' work against clear criteria are developing well.
- Teachers' marking of assessed tasks is very good and includes immediate and medium-term targets for improvement. Pupils are given clear assessment criteria for homework projects and each unit of work. However, some of these criteria are not sufficiently clear or do not include the higher Level 6.
- Insufficient use is made of the scrutiny of pupils' work to evaluate their rates of progress.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The geography curriculum provides a clear structure for progression in pupils' learning. The curriculum is continually being improved so that it is better matched to pupils' interests, for example.
- Pupils have good opportunities for creativity and initiative. For example, they plan a settlement and then justify their designs. They work with a good range of information and communication technology (ICT) but do not use geographical information systems.

- There is good liaison with the high school to which most pupils transfer about what is taught in each Key Stage 3 year group.
- Pupils cover a good range of geography work with opportunities to ask and answer their own questions. They have insufficient opportunities to learn about the richness and diversity of cultures in Britain.
- There are good fieldwork opportunities in Years 5, 6 and 7 and plans are in hand to introduce fieldwork in Year 8. Most pupils in each year group take part in an excellent range of residential courses in, for example, the Isle of Wight and the Lake District. In two of these residential courses, pupils use maps during orienteering but there is no other planned geography work. Opportunities to develop learning in geography are not utilised.

Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are outstanding.

- The accurate, frank self-evaluation is based on a very good and rigorous programme of monitoring that uses a wide range of evidence. The recorded evaluations are excellent.
- An excellent range of resources for planning and teaching geography lessons are held on the school's Intranet.
- Each teacher assesses pupils' standards twice each year, and the geography leader monitors pupils' progress midway through the year and identifies any pupils who are underachieving.
- The geography leader has had an outstanding impact on developing the geography subject knowledge of the large team of non-specialists who teach geography.
- There is a good capacity to further improve geography provision and standards because of the accurate, thorough self-evaluation and the good track record for improving geography.

Subject issue

The extent to which literacy is being used to enhance learning in geography is outstanding.

- The use of literacy by all subjects is a key whole-school priority. The links between each subject, including geography, and the texts and writing used in English have been audited.
- Some geography is taught in English lessons as, for example, Year 8 pupils' persuasive writing used the context of the geography of China as pupils wrote guidebooks for different audiences and levels of difficulty. Lesson plans include opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills.
- There are very good, structured opportunities for speaking and listening. For example, in a lesson about globalisation, two pupils took the roles of a sweatshop worker in Philippines and an unemployed

clothing worker in UK. There were also paired discussions about the views of four different organisations and people towards globalisation.

- Role plays are used well as, for example, when pupils debated a proposed coastal development.
- Pupils carry out a very good range of writing tasks. For example, they write newspaper reports about a flood, a teachers' guide to the Purbeck coast, and tourist leaflets for St Lucia.
- Pupils read a good range of texts for research, including the Internet as well as books.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion in geography is good overall.

- Most pupils achieve well and show good evidence of working hard in lessons. However, in one observed lesson a very small minority of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities were not engaged sufficiently with a challenging writing task at the end of the lesson.
- Last year, the analysis of assessment information showed that girls were making more progress than boys. As a result, improvements have been made to the curriculum and the ways pupils are assessed. The monitoring of pupils' progress during the current school year shows that boys' progress has improved.
- The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers.

Areas for improvement

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

- use the scrutiny of pupils' work as evidence to evaluate their rates of progress
- introduce the use of geographical information systems at Key Stage 3
- provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about the richness and diversity of cultures in Britain

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

Mike Milton
Additional Inspector