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Miss J Roberts  
Headteacher  
St Lukes C of E Primary School  
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Dear Miss Roberts

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 09 June 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 four lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both satisfactory overall.

- Pupils reach standards in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Most make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in geography.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception. They enjoy participating in a range of practical and first hand activities. They explore some features of their local environment and this is linked well to a range of associated

activities such as using large equipment to build different types of houses and developing their role play in the class's estate agency.

- Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of places they have studied by the end of Key Stage 1. They are able to design simple maps, recognise some human and physical features in their locality and are aware though their study of Struay and other places that the world extends beyond their locality. They know that they can get to different places in a variety of ways.
- Geography work develops appropriately in Years 3 and 4. Pupils increase their understanding of the British Isles and develop an increasing knowledge of environmental issues. This helps pupils to consolidate previously learned skills. Work in Year 4 is of a high standard. Themes on 'Chembakolli', 'Village Settlers' and 'Improving the Environment' develop pupils' knowledge and skills well.
- By the end of Year 6, most pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of work they have studied. They can confidently identify features of Llandudno using secondary sources. They can describe the characteristics of rivers and mountains using appropriate geographical vocabulary. Their work is sufficiently detailed and is generally presented neatly in a variety of interesting ways.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their geography work, especially when it is practical. Their behaviour is excellent in class and they respond very well to what is expected of them. Relationships between adults and pupils are exemplary.

### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features.

- In lessons observed, work is well planned with resources carefully selected to add interest to the subject.
- In the best lessons, explanations are clear, previous learning is re-enforced and pupils are given good opportunities to work in a variety of ways, ensuring access to a selection of learning techniques. Pupils respond very well to these opportunities.
- Occasionally, the pace of lessons slows which limits pupils' engagement and participation. Pupils sometimes find activities too challenging because they have not acquired the necessary skills required to undertake the task. This restricts the progress they make.
- Scrutiny of books shows that work is often similar for most pupils. This means that opportunities are not always taken to challenge the higher attaining pupils.
- Interactive Whiteboards, the Internet and programmable toys are used effectively to support teaching and learning. Pupils are confident information communication technology (ICT) users and utilise it to present their work in interesting ways. For example, Year 6 pupils presented their work on rivers to the whole school in assembly.

- Homework is used well to support learning and challenges pupils to develop their thinking and research skills.
- A new whole school approach to assessing geography has been agreed and is to be implemented from September 2008. This is designed to give teachers a clearer idea of the knowledge, skills and understanding achieved by pupils. Marking does not always inform pupils how they can improve.
- Lessons are well planned with suitable tasks provided for pupils with different learning needs and those with disabilities. However, the higher attaining pupils are not always extended enough.
- Boys and girls have equal access. Questioning is widely distributed and involves all pupils. However, on some occasions supplementary questions do not challenge or extend pupils further.
- Teaching assistants are generally well deployed to support individual or groups of pupils so that they can access the full range of learning opportunities.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- There is appropriate breadth and balance in the geography curriculum. A suitable range of themes are taught, but content is variable in some classes.
- A more creative curriculum is being piloted by the Change Team. Scrutiny of planning and pupils' work shows that where this has been implemented, the geography experience for pupils is much improved.
- Pupils have a good understanding of environmental issues as a result of participation in their ECO schools work. However, their knowledge of global issues is not as strong because there is insufficient emphasis on sustainable development in the curriculum.
- The school offers an acceptable range of fieldwork experiences. Pupils welcome and value the range of first hand opportunities offered to them. Work around the school, the Cannock landfill site, Brewood and Shoal Hill boost the subject and pupils' learning. Pupils' fieldwork skills are satisfactory.
- High quality geography displays in classrooms and corridors help augment the planned curriculum. Pupils use them appropriately to support their learning.

### Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- The newly appointed subject leader is keen to develop the subject further although she has not yet had the opportunity to monitor and evaluate work in geography.

- School leaders have an accurate understanding of the subjects' strengths and the areas for development. An appropriate plan of action following self-evaluation has been produced. This includes a manageable range of identified developments to bring about further improvement.
- A coherent subject leader file has been compiled. The whole school policy for geography has been reviewed with appropriate links to the Every Child Matters agenda.
- The subject leader has attended appropriate training and development opportunities in geography to inform herself about current issues in the subject.

### Subject issue

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

- Currently, planning in the long and medium term ensures an appropriate range of geographical enquiry. However, the school is in the process of reviewing its curriculum.
- The work currently being piloted in Year 4 is excellent. Using 'Building Learning Power' (BLP) as a basis, units of work have been revised with geography as the main focus of the theme.
- Appropriate, relevant and interesting cross curricular links have been identified particularly in history, literacy and mathematics. Learning is supported by motivating learning activities. Key questions support assessment of learning. Scrutiny of books shows a wider and more interesting range of geographical activities have been studied in greater depth in this year group.

### Areas for improvement

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

- further improve teaching and learning in geography by developing BLP throughout the school
- continue to develop and improve the curriculum further by using the findings of the Change Team to modify and adapt the geography curriculum throughout the school
- implement the agreed whole school assessment policy to help receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills to increase rates of progress
- provide opportunities for the subject leader to monitor and evaluate geography work throughout the school.

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