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Mrs K Cane  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Kane

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29 September 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 how effectively geography teaching and the curriculum promotes community cohesion.

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.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory with good features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory but standards are below average.

- Children start school with skills and experiences that are well below expected levels. In the Foundation Stage, children have an appropriate play based curriculum which satisfactorily develops their knowledge and understanding of the world. They are able to identify how they get to school, find out which is the most frequent mode of transport and describe routes taken. Geography skills are suitably developed and supported by a range of appropriate indoor and outdoor activities.

- Despite better teaching and an improving curriculum, standards remain below national expectations by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The legacy of weaker teaching and a less effective curriculum has left pupils with significant gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding. In addition, some pupils have difficulty in retaining previously learned facts.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of themes they have studied. They can find out about homes in other countries and compare them to their own home. They also are beginning to increase their understanding that weather and climatic conditions of localities affects the food that is produced and eaten.
- This work is soundly built on in Years 3 and 4. Increased development of mapwork skills enables pupils to discuss obesity levels and consider why some countries have more obese people than others.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are able to use atlases to locate great cities that have been built on the banks of major rivers. They are increasing their understanding of river features and how these influence the nature of human activities. However, previous weaknesses mean that standards by the end of Year 6 remain below average.
- Pupils are keen and interested in their work. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to clear classroom expectations. Relationships between adults and pupils are good.

#### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features.

- Work is well planned with activities and resources carefully selected to add interest to the lessons. Most teachers make learning objectives clear to pupils and these are revisited during lessons to recap on learning. This helps pupils to consolidate new knowledge.
- There were examples of good teaching in some of the lessons observed. A brisk pace, good questioning and clear instructions coupled with interesting activities helped pupils make good progress.
- However, satisfactory teaching typified by over-lengthy introductions or too much teacher talk left pupils seated and inactive for too long. This slowed the pace of lessons. In addition, some teachers demonstrated weaknesses in subject knowledge.
- Boys and girls have equal access to lessons. They are given opportunities to work in small groups, pairs and individually, ensuring access to a variety of learning techniques. Pupils respond well to these opportunities.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to support individuals or groups of pupils so that they access the full range of learning opportunities.
- An appropriate start has been made in modifying and developing more rigorous approaches to assessment. However, implementation is at an early stage.

## Quality of curriculum

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

- The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) is followed for most foundation subjects. An appropriate range of geography themes for each year group enables pupils to learn about contrasting places and their environments.
- Human and environmental themes are taught in sufficient depth. However, there is insufficient focus on physical geography throughout the school.
- Additional cross curricular themes such as International Weeks support the curriculum well. In addition, the Immersive, Developmental, Experiential Area (IDEA) room provides a stimulating and creative learning environment.
- Information communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning and enables pupils to re-enforce and develop their geographical skills.
- Fieldwork experiences around the school, to Conkers, Leicester airport and Beaumanor Hall motivate and inspire pupils. These visits are highly valued and contribute positively to the subject and pupils' learning.
- New resources have been purchased to support IPC themes. However, schools leaders know that some atlases and maps need replacing because they are worn and outdated.

## Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory with good features.

- The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic and has undertaken a thorough audit of the subject. Her subject file is comprehensive, well organised and she is well informed about current geographical issues.
- The geography policy, schemes of work and action plans are clear, thorough and relevant.
- Although the subject leader has a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject she has not yet had the opportunity to monitor and evaluate work in geography.
- She has successfully begun to implement change but there has been insufficient time for these to impact thoroughly.

## Subject issue

The effectiveness of geography teaching and the curriculum in promoting community cohesion is good.

- The school has a clear understanding of what is required to promote community cohesion. Increasing involvement of parents in the life and

work of the school is successfully building bridges and developing their understanding of how they can support their children.

- Learners have regular opportunities to participate in the community and are active in working with others from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. This is also helping to broaden the communities' understanding of the world beyond the New Parks Estate.
- Improvements in the school's teaching and curriculum are used effectively to increase pupils' understanding of the UK and global communities. For example, some pupils are beginning to articulate opinions about what impact the destruction of the Brazilian rainforests has on the world.
- Relationships are good. Positive interactions between all learners and staff are successfully encouraged.
- Effective links have been established with neighbouring schools, schools in the UK and further afield. These connections are helping to increase awareness of similarities and differences in contrasting locations.

#### Areas for improvement

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

- fully develop and embed assessment procedures to help receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills to increase rates of progress
- purchase additional resources to further support the geography curriculum
- 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