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Mrs Reeve  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Reeve

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 08 May 2009 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are both satisfactory.

- By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils reach standards in line with national expectations. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in geography throughout the school.

- In Reception, Years 1 and 2, pupils explore their immediate locality. They are able to draw simple maps of how to travel to and from their favourite areas of the classroom. Children know that food comes from different countries. They are able to recognise different forms of transport and know how to get to other places in this country and abroad.
- In Years 2 and 3, map work skills are suitably developed through the use of maps, globes and atlases. Through their study of Struay and St Lucia, pupils are able to recognise different human and physical features of islands and how these compare to their own. They are able to compare and describe places that are different to their own environment. Pupils build on work in their area and know that the world extends beyond their locality.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils demonstrate secure knowledge of knowledge of maps, rivers, mountains and coastal landscapes. Pupils' fieldwork skills are developed appropriately following the visit to Gibraltar Point. They are able to compare and contrast differing localities through their work on Chembakolli and flooding in Bangladesh. Pupils also increase their awareness of environmental issues through their water topic.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and they respond well to clear classroom expectations. They are very keen and interested in their work and are able to present this neatly and in interesting ways. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good.

### Quality of teaching and learning of geography

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features.

- In those lessons observed, work was suitably planned and previous learning was built on to extend pupils' thinking. Activities and resources were properly chosen to support the lessons.
- Appropriate opportunities were provided for pupils to work in small groups, pairs or individually, ensuring access to a variety of learning techniques. Suitable use was made of assessment for learning techniques such as talk partners.
- Pupils' enjoyment and engagement was increased when lessons were practical, interesting and challenging such as when using maps of the school grounds to search for different plants. Pupils were motivated when they had the opportunity to plan, record and develop work for themselves.
- At times, work completed is similar for all pupils. When this is the case, higher attaining pupils are not always provided with additional challenge to secure better progress. Occasionally, there is an overuse of worksheets to record work. This stifles the development of pupils' independent or creative skills.
- Information communication technology (ICT) and visual resources are used appropriately and these help enliven the subject. Pupils are confident in using computers to record their work and for research.
- School leaders know that assessment requires improvement. Assessment and moderation of pupils' work is focused at the end of each year, based

on coverage of planned work not the skills achieved. Outcomes are not used currently to plan next steps in learning or to ensure that that knowledge and understanding develops progressively. As a result, there is not a secure enough understanding of how well pupils are doing and what needs to be done to help them progress.

## Quality of curriculum

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

- The geography curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. The scheme of work is suitably detailed and the planned themes are covered in sufficient depth. Further curriculum development is scheduled to move to a more cross-curricular approach.
- Participation in real life and practical problem solving activities helps promote pupils' geography skills well. For example, pupils developed and re-enforced their field work skills by participating in 'The Playground Partnership'. Here, they constructed and analysed questionnaires, made and evaluated plans and interpreted maps. A local traffic survey also contributed to the construction of the school's traffic plan.
- Participation in a number of initiatives such as 'Wisbech Schools Project', 'Global School Partnerships' and 'The Extra Mile' contribute positively to the curriculum but some are at an early stage of development. For example, the recently produced heritage resource pack for Wisbech contains some good geography links but these have yet to be applied.
- Pupils have a sound knowledge of global issues and are increasing their understanding of their complexity. For example, pupils are increasing their awareness of sustainability through the development of the school's garden and grounds.
- Although the school has some established links with other schools such as a primary school in South Africa, these are not yet fully exploited to increase pupils' understanding and geographical awareness of other countries and places.
- Pupils speak positively about their fieldwork experiences around the school, the village, Wisbech and Freiston Shore. These contribute well to the subject and their learning.

## Leadership and management of geography

Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

- In this small school, all staff have maintained oversight of the subject and its development. However, there have been some positive recent changes.
- A new subject leader has been appointed. She is keen to develop and improve the subject but has had insufficient time to impact fully.
- Although staff in this small school discuss work informally and have a secure understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the subject, there has been no formal programme of monitoring and evaluation in recent

years. However, this has now been agreed with the process scheduled to start imminently.

- Good links have been established with Wisbech schools leading to some good curriculum developments and initiatives.
- The subject leader has not recently had the opportunity to attend training to help her to develop her subject leadership role, inform herself about current issues in geography and establish links with other subject leaders.

### Subject issue

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

- The school has developed a comprehensive community cohesion policy in collaboration with the Wisbech schools cluster.
- A good range of community cohesion activities are promoted within the immediate locality. However, pupils' understanding of different UK and world localities are not so strong because they are not taught in sufficient depth.
- No evaluation has been undertaken to determine the impact that these activities have on pupils' understanding or learning about community cohesion linked issues.
- Although the school recognises the importance of delivering community cohesion through the geography curriculum, explicit links are not yet identified within the geography policy or within the geography schemes of work.
- Relationships are good. There are very positive interactions between all learners and staff.

### Areas for improvement

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

- continue to review the curriculum and link subjects together where appropriate to make geography even more interesting, relevant and enjoyable for pupils
- devise a simple method of sharing assessments made by teachers which effectively tracks pupils' progress and helps receiving teachers build on pupils' prior skills in order to increase rates of progress
- develop pupils' understanding of different UK and world communities by studying them in greater depth
- identify appropriate community cohesion links in the revised curriculum and evaluate their impact on pupils knowledge and understanding of different types of community to their own.

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