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Miss S Goldsmith
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Goldsmith

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 27 January 2010 to look at work in geography.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit focused on how effectively geography teaching and the curriculum promote 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- Pupils make good progress from starting points that are well below average. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they are achieving standards in geography which are just below national expectations.
- Pupils can discuss global and environmental issues with confidence. They articulate their ideas to reduce their carbon footprint well and demonstrate good citizenship qualities. They have recently taken action to independently collect and recycle clothes and shoes to help people in Haiti following the recent earthquake.

- Pupils are aware of the similarities and differences between different places and can discuss human and physical features well. However, pupils' knowledge of the location of different places is underdeveloped.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and are able to collaborate on activities well. Their good and often excellent behaviour contributes significantly to their learning.

Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teachers plan geography lessons well and use a variety of approaches that successfully engages the vast majority of pupils. Oral and written feedback to pupils is of good quality and pupils know how well they are doing in geography.
- Teachers challenge pupils well through the range of activities they offer. Pupils enjoy their geography lessons and are supported well by staff who use their good geographical knowledge effectively.
- Teachers are now using assessment information to plan lessons to meet pupils' needs. The school is aware that sometimes pupils capable of higher attainment are not fully challenged in lessons.
- Information and communication technology and other resources are used to good effect to stimulate learning and this contributes to pupils' good progress in geography.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The school has recently changed the geography curriculum to include an international approach. This meets statutory requirements and makes a good overall contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of geography. The school enhances the curriculum effectively with a variety of visits and visitors.
- Most study units develop pupils' geographical knowledge, understanding and skills well. However, one unit does not and is mainly a context for learning in other subject areas. The school is aware of this and is reviewing the geography curriculum to ensure improvement.
- Global citizenship and education for sustainable development are a key part of the curriculum. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic about these issues and the geography curriculum meets their needs and interests well.
- Fieldwork experiences enhance pupils' understanding of contrasting environments. However, opportunities to ensure the progressive development of pupils' fieldwork skills are sometimes missed.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is outstanding.

- The geography co-ordinator has a key role in the high-quality monitoring and evaluation of geography throughout the school. Highly accurate evaluations identify strengths and areas for further development precisely.
- A detailed and thorough analysis of teachers' planning, pupils' workbooks, observations of lessons and discussions with pupils and teachers enable the co-ordinator to assess the curriculum and the quality of pupils' learning in geography with precision.
- All pupils and groups are monitored rigorously and any underachievement is highlighted and followed up. Data are thoroughly analysed and reasons for differences in attainment are investigated and acted upon.
- The co-ordinator is supported well by senior management. Collaboratively, they are a reflective and proactive team which ensures that the school's provision in geography is now good and improving.

Subject issue: the effectiveness of geography teaching and the curriculum in promoting community cohesion

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

- Community cohesion is delivered effectively through the geography curriculum and provides pupils with good opportunities to compare and contrast their own community with others in different countries.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of different localities. The school has links to other schools in Australia, France and Holland and is currently making further links with other schools to place more units of the curriculum in context.
- Geography encourages pupils to understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens well. For example, following the climate talks in Copenhagen in December 2009, a large group of pupils wrote to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about their concerns for their local and the global environment. Their views and concerns were noted by government officials.
- Diversity is promoted well and pupils are aware of different lifestyles and how these compare to their own. In geography lessons, they are respectful of differences, and relationships between different groups are harmonious.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing pupils' understanding of the locations of different places around the world
- ensuring fieldwork skills are developed in a logical sequence.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop geography in 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Liam Trippier
Her Majesty's Inspector