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Mrs M Gibson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gibson

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: geography

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 December 2010 to look at work 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 without their consent.

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 and other activities.

The overall effectiveness of geography is outstanding.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is outstanding.

- Pupils' attainment in Year 6 is above average. They are able to describe and explain key aspects of the geography that they have studied and have a particularly good understanding of cultural diversity, interdependence, environmental change and sustainability. They are also able to describe the similarities and differences between places at different scales. Their knowledge of physical processes is not as strong.
- The progress that pupils make is outstanding. In a Reception class, the children demonstrated their knowledge of the world by recalling different countries and recognising different habitats and the animals that live there. In a Year 3 lesson, they were able to describe and provide simple explanations as to why tourists would visit Egypt, and pose their own questions. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils demonstrated an excellent

understanding of the different aspects of the 'hamburger chain' based on their independent research. In a Year 1 class, children were able to use a range of artefacts to answer questions about another country.

- Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they work very effectively together in groups. In all lessons and discussions, the pupils were enthusiastic about learning geography both in and outside of the classroom.

Quality of teaching of geography

The quality of teaching in geography is outstanding.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about geography and its importance in understanding the world and communicate this very effectively to the pupils. This plays an important part in the high levels of engagement that they demonstrated in lessons.
- Teachers plan lessons very carefully, ensuring that there are clear geographical success criteria and there is a strong focus on learning.
- In lessons teachers successfully use a wide range of strategies to involve pupils fully in their learning. They are especially adept at getting pupils to work collaboratively, as well as providing good opportunities for independent learning.
- Information and communication technology is used very effectively by teachers to support whole-class teaching and by pupils to enhance their learning.
- The use of maps is commonplace and an extensive range of artefacts used skilfully helps to bring the subject alive.
- Regular oral assessment via targeted questioning and feedback provides pupils with a clear picture of how well they are learning in lessons. Written feedback is frequent and detailed although the targets that teachers set do not always focus sufficiently on improving pupils' geographical understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is good.

- The curriculum has some clear strengths, especially in the coverage of the key concepts of place, diversity, environmental change and sustainability. There is clear progression across each key stage.
- The coverage of physical processes has less prominence than other aspects of the curriculum.
- A detailed curriculum overview is supported by comprehensive medium-term plans that are produced collaboratively by staff.
- A wide range of off-site visits, including a residential experience for older pupils, and international links make a good contribution to the pupils' learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is outstanding.

- There is a strong, whole-school collaborative approach to the development of geography that is managed very effectively by the coordinator.
- The coordinator inspires confidence and commitment from the staff and through an informal, yet highly effective approach to managing the subject, has a clear grasp of its strengths and areas for development.
- Geography has a very high profile in the school and makes a significant contribution to community cohesion.
- The school has clear aims for the subject and sees every child as a geographer.
- All the necessary documentation is in place and through the regular monitoring of teachers' planning and the formal moderation of pupils' work leaders are very well informed of the quality of geography across the school.
- The displays of geographical work throughout the school are of high quality and promote learning effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that physical processes are given greater prominence across the curriculum
- focusing teachers' target-setting on improving pupils' geographical understanding.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop geography in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Paul Dowgill
Additional Inspector