

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs S Allen
Headteacher
Frenchay Church of England Primary School
Churchside
Frenchay
Bristol
BS16 1NB

Dear Mrs Allen

Ofsted 2011–12 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 2012 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 younger children's free choice outdoor activities.

The overall effectiveness of geography is good with an outstanding curriculum.

Achievement in geography

Achievement in geography is good.

- Pupils are taught to appreciate their lovely local environment and even the youngest ones in the Early Years Foundation Stage can identify key physical and human features such as the river, bridge and the church.
- The Eco Club has a high profile and this encourages pupils to care for the school environment with litter patrols and by raising awareness of where and how pupils' play damages plants. They are able to link this knowledge to wider environmental issues and know, for example, the purpose of the solar panels in the locality and the wind turbines in the Severn estuary.
- Pupils are able to explain why the trim trail is made from sustainable materials. Knowledge of various woods, including that from the

rainforests, has been well developed as a result of the exciting topic work that has captured their interest. Empathy for others is good.

- Pupils ask searching enquiry questions. Currently, these are about the Jurassic Coast and the impact of coastal erosion on the cliffs and fossils. The questions are the pupils' own and are skilfully built on by teachers to stretch their thinking further.
- Pupils enjoy access to and understand the scale involved on a good range of maps, globes and atlases and other resources such as oblique photographs. They are skilled at using Google Earth and other information and communication resources. Software has been well selected to stimulate interest and concentration, including in the Reception class.
- Behaviour is good in lessons although, on occasions during group work, pupils prefer to work independently rather than as part of a team.

Quality of teaching in geography

The quality of teaching in geography is good.

- Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject. This is used well to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Teachers cope well with the mixed-age classes and ensure that there are tasks and challenges to engage everyone.
- Both whole-class and group teaching are good. Pupils have time to ask questions and explore ideas. They are really keen to find out more about the world.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and uses either a cloud to indicate an area needing more work or a sun showing where pupils have gained a good understanding. This works well and pupils are clear how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Assessment within lessons promptly identifies where ideas require more explanation.
- Fieldwork is regular and topics all involve exciting starting events. Pupils are encouraged to explore the local city of Bristol and consequently develop a good understanding of their place in the world as teachers highlight, for example, how the docks and rivers are linked. This leads to pupils developing a good technical vocabulary.
- Occasionally, there are insufficient interventions from the teacher to enable one or two groups to benefit from a brief recap or intervention to help them to tackle the tasks more as a team rather than as competitive individuals.

Quality of the curriculum in geography

The quality of the curriculum in geography is outstanding.

- After a lot of debate and evaluation the school selected a creative skills based scheme on which to base its geography. It has very successfully adapted the commercial scheme to its own needs and locality. It is

designed exceptionally carefully to ensure coverage of all the programmes of study.

- Every topic has specific geographical skills incorporated in it. Topics are also assessed to ensure that the pupils are getting a good breadth of geographical knowledge and understanding.
- Fieldwork is a regular part of the school's provision and pupils are encouraged to draw and record what they observe. Recently, for example, they had a good look at the new Cardiff Bay development when on a trip to a cultural event. They also make excellent models of physical geographical processes and are keen to explain what these represent.
- As yet, the outstanding curriculum has not been in place for long enough to have had full impact on the oldest learners; who gained some of their knowledge through the more formal units of work previously used rather than through an incremental and field-based approach.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in geography

The effectiveness of leadership and management in geography is good.

- Leadership of the subject is strong. Staff evaluate what they do and adjust it according to need. This includes a complex two-year curriculum cycle due to the mixed-age classes.
- The school has good links with the secondary school and pupils enjoy transition work that includes geography.
- The school is not currently a member of one of the geographical associations but is aware of the work they do and uses the free material from the relevant websites.
- Senior staff monitor the subject conscientiously and have a clear idea of how learning in the subject is developing.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils of all ages are challenged with incrementally more complex fieldwork skills
- making more effective use of the support and resources provided by the subject associations to further develop geographical learning.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector