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Mrs L Austin  
Headteacher  
Bolham Community Primary School  
Bolham  
Tiverton  
EX16 7RA

Dear Mrs Austin

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: history**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 8 November 2010 to look at work in history.

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 one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress and attain standards that are above average.
- They show good knowledge and understanding of aspects of life in different historical periods. For example, Year 6 pupils had a good grasp of the process and purpose of mummification in ancient Egypt and of aspects of life in the mills in the Victorian period. Older pupils understand the value of studying the past. As one Year 6 pupil explained, 'studying "what they did" helps you recognise what you could do'.
- Pupils' understanding of chronology is good. Year 6 pupils sequenced four pictorial sources accurately and showed a good grasp of the differing intervals between the periods of history represented.
- Year 6 pupils also impressed with their ability to make accurate and rapid inferences from an Egyptian tomb painting while Year 4 showed a firm

grasp of the value of pots as sources of evidence about life in ancient Greece.

- History makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. They enjoy the subject and particularly appreciate the many visits that enrich the curriculum.

### **Quality of teaching in history**

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers focus successfully on engaging pupils' interest through practical activities and a wide range of visits and visitors.
- They use a good range of historical sources and provide pupils with opportunities to consider these carefully and draw appropriate conclusions.
- In the lesson observed, pupils studied a wide range of photographs of Egyptian artefacts carefully, producing well-considered suggestions of their purpose, and then moved briskly to prepare a presentation for their peers on an aspect of Egyptian life. Small groups worked at mummifying a fish or making a canopic jar. Learning proceeded at a good pace as pupils' interest had been aroused by the various activities and they sustained their concentration well.
- Teachers make a judgement of pupils' attainment at the end of each unit and annotate planning usefully with comments on pupils' responses to the activities. However, this is not consistent across the school.
- Year 6 pupils value teachers' comments on how to improve their work, although some younger pupils are less secure on how to do better. More detailed comments on identified pieces of work in each unit are not provided consistently.

### **Quality of the curriculum in history**

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- An appropriate two-year cycle is in place where pupils explore one or two history topics each year. Some significant gaps between historical studies are bridged by using opportunities to explore the past in other topics.
- Planning for history topics is thorough and good links are made with other subjects where relevant. Work in history makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' skills in literacy and in information and communication technology.
- The school provides a wide range of exciting experiences to enrich learning. Good use is made of the school's 19<sup>th</sup> century records and the rich resources available in the locality and in more distant locations are explored well. These include a wide range of museums and historic buildings. Visitors, such as artists and re-enactment groups, add a further dimension.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in history**

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in history is good.

- You provide established and committed leadership for this subject. You have worked effectively to develop the curriculum, making good use of a partnership with a local university.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and based on a good range of information, including the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work as well as discussion with pupils. Teachers' assessments provide a clear picture of pupils' attainment but further analysis, for example to explore pupils' performance over time, is not carried out routinely at present.
- Resources are sharply focused and include useful folders of further material and additional guidance for staff.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- making more systematic use of assessment information to compare pupils' performance in the subject over time
- more consistent identification of an activity in each unit where teachers can provide more detailed feedback for pupils, including guidance on how to do better.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop history 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

**Grahame Sherfield**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**