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Mr N Snape
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Snape

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 25 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 you, staff and pupils; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; an analysis of pupils' work; and the observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- From relatively low starting points, pupils make good progress and attain standards that are broadly in line with the expectations for their ages.
- Pupils are developing their chronological understanding well. They understand changes over a broad expanse of time. Their sense of period is strengthened by, for example, learning about aspects of local history.
- Pupils are developing their historical skills well. They can use a wide range of evidence and can ask relevant questions about it. As they get older, their skills of enquiry develop better.
- Pupils can communicate well about the past and many write well for their ages. The higher attainers can write extensively, and for different audiences and purposes. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are well developed. Those in Year 6, for example, can construct good electronic presentations about the lives of famous people.

- Pupils' quality of learning is good and they enjoy studying the subject. Their attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They work for sustained periods, and work well with each other and with the adults.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers create a good learning environment in lessons based on good relationships.
- Lessons are planned in detail and the needs of the various abilities are taken into account. Teachers question pupils well who respond enthusiastically. They are keen to answer questions in whole-class discussions.
- The interactive whiteboard is used well. Teachers use it to stimulate pupils' thinking and websites are located on it for further in-depth work as a class.
- Pupils work well in small groups and enjoy the tasks set. They make good progress because the tasks are open-ended and involve investigative work with different types of evidence.
- The pace to the learning is brisk. Time is used well and explicit timescales, which have been identified for particular activities, are adhered to.
- Teachers offer detailed and regular oral feedback to the pupils. This supports the detailed marking in pupils' books. Targets for improvement are set routinely and pupils value these and the teachers' comments. They say it helps them to improve their work.
- Pupils' progress across the school is monitored closely. The school has developed baseline assessments in Year 1 and end-of-unit assessments in all year groups which identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The information is tracked and trends quickly identified. Appropriate action is taken, as needed, to intervene with particular pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and it meets requirements. It is coherent and offers pupils a good experience of history through cross-curricular approaches. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills through the study of history.
- Planning for progression is good, especially for the development of skills. These are incorporated well into the assessment procedures.
- Work on local history is being expanded well. Pupils regularly study aspects of life in Pilsley in the past and learn, for example, about the changing use of buildings over time.
- Pupils are offered a good range of enrichment experiences. They regularly visit places of historical interest, for instance Hardwick Hall and

Chesterfield Museum. Some valuable research work on paintings at Chatsworth House has been undertaken by the gifted and talented pupils. They share their experiences with other pupils in the school. Visitors are invited regularly into school to talk to pupils about aspects of local history.

- The range of experiences offered to pupils contributes well to their enjoyment of the subject. The open-ended tasks which are often planned enhance their creative skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- The subject leader has been in post for only a few weeks and has some good ideas on how to further develop the subject. As the previous subject leader, you are helping her well to settle down in this role.
- You and the subject leader lead the subject well. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction. Staff have been given good advice and guidance.
- There is a thorough understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject through thorough self-evaluation. This includes careful scrutiny of planning, a scrutiny of pupils' work and the use of end-of-unit assessments to track pupils' progress across the school. The views of pupils are also taken into account. Weaknesses are identified and addressed.
- Although, as the previous subject leader you have observed lessons, the current subject leader has not. She has yet to develop the full range of monitoring and evaluation responsibilities across the school. Staff development in recent years has been limited.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the subject leader is helped and supported to undertake the full range of monitoring and evaluation activities within the school
- ensuring that staff training in history is regularly undertaken.

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

Champak Chauhan
Additional Inspector