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28 September 2010

Mrs B Fleet
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Dear Mrs Fleet

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 16 September 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 a good knowledge and understanding of features of life in different historical periods. For example, Year 6 pupils could explain confidently and accurately some key features of a street in a Tudor town. Pupils are convinced of the value of studying the past. As one Year 4 put it, 'if we didn't know anything about the past, we wouldn't be able to get better in the future'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of chronology. Year 4 pupils could sequence images of homes in the past accurately and Year 6 pupils understood that the intervals between the periods they have studied vary and could position images appropriately on a timeline.

- Pupils draw on their wider knowledge well to help them in using historical sources. For example, Year 2 pupils were able to use their knowledge of the Victorians to help them in exploring a photograph of children at the seaside. Year 6 pupils understood that the Victorian period can be seen differently according to the focus of study, but were less secure in their grasp of the widening range of source material available for more recent periods.
- History makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. They enjoy this subject very much and particularly value the many activities that enrich the curriculum.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers share a commitment to the subject's place in the curriculum and value what it has to offer to the pupils.
- They provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to engage in the study of the past in some depth. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their work in history.
- In the lesson observed, there was a real sense of excitement and pupils were very keen to explore mummification in ancient Egypt using a range of books and to share what they had found out at the end of the lesson. Their learning proceeded at a good pace as books had been selected carefully to match the pupils' needs and the teacher provided good support as they worked.
- Teachers establish pupils' levels of understanding carefully at the start of a topic and note on lesson plans how well individuals or groups of pupils have completed activities, to inform planning for future lessons..
- Marking is frequent, evaluative and encouraging. Year 6 pupils in particular value the guidance given on how to do better and, for these older pupils, marking sometimes sparks a written dialogue between teacher and pupil about how work might be improved. The school monitors progress effectively using clear overall judgements of pupils' attainment at the end of each topic.
- Pupils do not currently benefit in history from the 'learning ladders' used in English to help pupils to assess their own writing and clarify how to improve it.

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 three history topics each year.
- Planning is thorough, informed by a clear understanding of progression, and involves good links with other subjects where relevant. History makes

a useful contribution to the development of pupils' writing skills, although the opportunities are not yet set out clearly across the history curriculum.

- A firm commitment exists to help pupils to understand how events and developments in the past have shaped the world today.
- The school provides a wide range of memorable experiences to enrich learning. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' high levels of enjoyment. Visits to places and events, visiting speakers, good use of the school's historic building and exploration of the rich history of the locality all play their part.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- In this small school, staff collaborate well in planning activities and discussing ideas and examples of pupils' work. The subject's development is a shared endeavour, overseen effectively by you, and priorities for improvement are well considered and clear.
- The professional development needs of staff are met well. Local authority support is available through materials on its website, regular twilight meetings and day courses.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the contribution of history to developing pupils' skills in English, particularly in writing, to establish a clear framework to maximise the benefits for both subjects
- extending the 'learning ladder' approach to key pieces of work in history to assist pupils further in assessing their own work and understanding how to improve it.

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