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30 November 2010

Mrs F Bradshaw  
Headteacher  
Whitehill Junior School  
Whitehill Road  
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Hertfordshire  
SG4 9HT

Dear Mrs Bradshaw

### **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 18 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.

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 a meeting with the local museum's learning officer who has been working with your school. No lessons could be observed because history was not being taught on the day.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Pupils' attainment is well above the expectations for their ages, with learning and progress that are often outstanding. Pupils have excellent historical knowledge and understanding. Their enquiry skills are highly developed because of the strong emphasis on these across the school.
- Pupils work with a wide range of sources and can ask pertinent questions about them. Their skills of interpreting evidence are enhanced through, for example, local archaeological digs and studying the burial site at Sutton Hoo. There is good, extended writing by the higher attainers.

- Pupils' development of chronological understanding is fostered well through, for instance, the study of family history and the timelines of the lives of famous women.
- Pupils' organisation and communication of historical knowledge and understanding are greatly improved through imaginative writing, recording historical narratives on DVDs, creating stop-motion animation, and the use of computers for extended research. They also communicate their ideas and feelings about topics well through an interactive website.
- Pupils are passionate about history and thoroughly enjoy learning the subject.

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

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- Pupils are taught a stimulating range of activities. The needs of higher and lower attaining pupils are met well.
- Teachers give in-depth feedback to pupils, both written and oral. Pupils find this very useful and say that it helps them to improve their work. Teachers offer intensive help to pupils to promote rigorous historical thinking.
- Pupils are given excellent opportunities to undertake in-depth research, for example about the history of the River Thames, or evaluating evidence about the Gunpowder Plot.
- Teachers are passionate about the study of history and this is communicated to the pupils. Pupils approach historical enquiries as keen and skilled investigators. Audio-visual evidence shows that lessons are exciting and innovative.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is outstanding.

- History is taught as part of the international primary curriculum approach which emphasises the development of skills through a cross-curricular approach. The place of history within this is firmly established and the curriculum is broad and balanced. Legal requirements are met.
- Pupils are offered outstanding and memorable opportunities. From a very early age, there is excellent emphasis on learning the historical skills of enquiry and interpretation.
- An excellent emphasis is placed on the study of local history and there are strong links with the local museum. Pupils carry out in-depth research on how the town of Hitchin has changed over the last 1,000 years and focus on its development at particular times, for example during the Victorian period.
- Pupils' experiences are further enriched by visits to places of historical interest, for example to war cemeteries in France, and to the Albert Hall in

London. Visitors come into school regularly to talk to pupils about aspects of history.

- Pupils' creativity is greatly enhanced by the imaginative approaches taken and by the development of strong cross-curricular links. There is an excellent range of learning experiences which makes the subject highly enjoyable. Pupils are developing their skills in literacy and information and communication technology well.

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

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

- History has a high profile within the school and the subject is led extremely well. Innovative methods for planning are suggested to the teachers and there is a sustained record of successful and meaningful experiences for the pupils.
- The subject leader and senior leaders have an excellent understanding of strengths and areas for development in the subject. This is based on regular reflection and thorough self-evaluation. There is excellent collaboration between teachers and the sharing of good practice. Excellent links have been established with external agencies.
- The regular training of staff about current approaches to teaching and learning history is, however, relatively underdeveloped.

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

- enhancing opportunities for training and development in history so that staff can keep abreast of national trends in the subject.

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 sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the unique reference number for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Champak Chauhan**  
**Additional Inspector**