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Mr T Starkey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Starkey

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 13 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and pupils of all abilities and groups make good progress in developing their historical skills and understanding. Pupils undertake a wide range of interesting and imaginative activities both inside and outside the classroom, such as finding out how people lived in Birmingham's 'back to backs' and their experience of the Second World War. The focus on comparing and contrasting the lives of people then and now is good.
- Teachers encourage pupils to think carefully before answering questions. In Year 2, pupils were encouraged to ask good questions about London at the time of the Great Fire. In Year 4, pupils learnt quickly how to interrogate sources of evidence about Henry VIII.
- Pupils' personal development is good in history. Pupils said that history is 'very enjoyable because teachers make it exciting'. They said they write a

lot about all the different topics they study and that they enjoy organising their ideas in written form. Pupils like learning about 'how the past can show us how we can do things better and not make big mistakes'. They are good at sequencing photographs from different periods and also at estimating how big the gap in time might be between them.

- Behaviour is good in lessons and pupils work well together in small groups.
- Pupils are encouraged to present their findings clearly to the rest of their group and then the whole class. They do this well. Pupils have accurate knowledge about the topics they study, and have a good understanding of the importance of basing their ideas on evidence. They like showing their thinking on interactive whiteboards.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers develop good relationships with pupils. Lessons are planned well to ensure that the activities engage all pupils. Lessons are based on clear learning objectives which are shared carefully with pupils.
- In lessons, teachers constantly communicate their expectations to pupils and give good support to those who find some topics difficult. Marking in pupils' books is satisfactory because not all comments help pupils to see how to improve their work.
- Teachers track and record the progress of individual pupils in their development of historical skills well, but have yet to map out clearly when the different skills will be revisited in class work.
- The use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' understanding of topics and enhance their presentations to the class is good.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The school has developed a good thematic curriculum where history retains discrete time in each year group. A rolling programme of history topics has been coordinated well and linked strongly to other topics being studied.
- The emphasis on developing pupils' historical knowledge and understanding is good. These aspects are strengthened in other subjects when the focus is on a history topic, for example the Second World War, in English. This provides pupils with good opportunities to make links between subjects and to develop a basic 'sense of history'.
- The school organises a good range of visits to places of historical interest locally and pupils say they enjoy these very much. They can recall important aspects of their visits which are then developed further in lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- The subject coordinator manages the subject well. He has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of history. The subject is monitored well and a detailed log is kept of management activities and actions with good plans for further development.
- Monitoring of teaching is good and is supported by regular work reviews and discussions with pupils.
- The curriculum is planned well indicating how topics build on each other across time. However, these plans require more detailed mapping of the progression of skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the current mapping of history-specific skills so that progression over time can be demonstrated more clearly
- ensuring that marking consistently provides helpful comments for pupils to understand how they can improve their learning in history.

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

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector