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Mrs Stephanie Edmonds
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Edmonds

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 2 December 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 staff and pupils; 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 outstanding.

- From above average starting points, pupils make good progress in history which results in high attainment by the end of Year 6. Pupils have excellent knowledge and understanding of topics studied in depth. They are skilled historical enquirers and have a good understanding of how historians find out about the past. Older pupils have an excellent sense of how different periods in the past fit together. Their skills in interrogating evidence and understanding the different ways that the past is represented are less well-developed.
- History makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils say that they enjoy history because of the fun and varied ways in which they learn. Their behaviour in history is impeccable

and they respond diligently and energetically to opportunities to work in groups.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teaching ensures that learning is underpinned by a good sense of historical enquiry. In one lesson seen, Year 1 pupils made excellent progress because the activities challenged them to think really hard as they decided whether a range of photographs and artefacts was old or new. Pupils made rapid progress because teaching strategies were highly imaginative and matched carefully to the needs of all groups of learners. By the end of the lesson, higher attainers were able to organise a series of photographs into chronological order and explain their reasoning to the rest of the class.
- Assessment is not used consistently in all years to plan learning which fully meets the needs of all ability groups.
- Although marking is completed conscientiously, it is not yet sufficiently effective in helping pupils to understand how to develop their subject-specific skills. This in part is because pupils are not set targets in history. As a result, they do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- Recent changes to the curriculum have ensured an excellent balance between discrete history teaching and cross-curricular working. A good range of enquiry questions underpins the learning in all years and ensures that pupils are skilled in asking and answering complex questions about the past. Their sense of period is deepened through good links with other subjects, including art and literacy. Good strategies are in place to strengthen pupils' chronological understanding, for example, through their investigations into how Goodrich Castle has changed over time.
- The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of trips and visits which helps to build pupils' understanding of the history of the local and wider community. Pupils report that they enjoy these opportunities very much. Pupils also benefit from regular opportunities to celebrate their history work in assemblies through presentation and performance. This year, in the summer, Year 2 pupils presented a play to their parents on the theme of Samuel Pepys and the Great Fire of London.
- Although strategies are in place to plan for progression in the development of pupils' historical knowledge, skills and understanding, they have not yet been embedded.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- History is well led by an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and highly committed subject leader. Resources are extremely well-organised and policies, curriculum maps and schemes of work are coherent and comprehensive. Teachers are passionate about history and the subject enjoys a very high profile in the school.
- The subject leader has a very accurate understanding of the key strengths and areas for development in history and good strategies are in place to strengthen provision further. Monitoring and evaluation are also strengthened through good subject links with the governing body.
- Leaders and managers recognise that they do not yet have a sufficiently accurate view of pupils' achievement in history. This hinders their ability to evaluate with sufficient rigour the impact of provision on all groups of learners.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthen systems to monitor and evaluate pupils' attainment and achievement in history
- embed recent strategies to plan for progression in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in history
- improve the use of assessment in history by ensuring that staff and pupils have a clear understanding of pupils' subject-specific targets so that pupils know how well they are doing in history and how they can improve.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector