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Ms P Dempsey  
Headteacher  
Claremont Primary School  
Claremont Road  
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Manchester  
M14 7NA

Dear Ms Dempsey

### **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 10 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 learners and the chair of governors; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of two lessons; a tour of the school and attendance at assembly.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- From exceptionally low skill levels, particularly in language, literacy and communication, pupils reach average attainment in history by the end of Year 6. This represents outstanding progress for all groups of pupils across the school.
- As a result of skilled support, comprehensive planning to meet their needs and an emphasis on literacy in history, pupils with English as an additional language use specific historical terminology as confidently as their peers and often with an accuracy which belies their years.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the topics that they are studying, such as the Great Fire of London, and give accurate information about the types of sources that historians use to make their judgements. However, their

understanding of the reasons why there are different interpretations of the past is less well developed.

- Personal development is outstanding. Pupils love history, have the highest regard for their teachers and collaborate exceptionally well with their classmates in their search for the truth. Behaviour and engagement in lessons are excellent.

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

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can do and use sophisticated questioning in lessons to encourage them to reach for high standards. In Year2, for example, pupils receive 'challenge cards' and have to decide on building materials used after the Great Fire and justify why they were chosen.
- There is significant emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and also on practical activities to reinforce learning in history.
- Teachers use the electronic whiteboard very creatively as both a teaching and a learning tool. Pupils are given ample opportunities to use computers for research and also to present their findings, for example on the conditions aboard slave ships.
- Assessment is good; pupils' achievement is tracked regularly and there are termly assessments of their acquisition of historical skills and knowledge. Teachers are now working towards a greater emphasis on the use of National Curriculum level descriptors to gauge pupils' progress and attainment more closely and to establish a portfolio of levelled assignments.
- Marking is outstanding. Pupils receive detailed comments on how they can improve their work and teachers check on whether the pupils have taken heed of this advice.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is outstanding.

- History is an element of the geography, history and social understanding programme yet it retains its subject integrity and teachers place considerable emphasis on pupils' acquisition of discrete historical skills. It is also an integral part of the topic work covered during the Early Years Foundation Stage and children in both Nursery and Reception dress up in historical costumes and discover the meaning of old and new in relation to their own lives.
- Display is outstanding and history enjoys an exceptionally high profile around school. In addition to pupils' work on the French Revolution, the English Civil War, Manchester's industrial heritage and Ancient Egypt, there are also interactive displays in the corridors; with these, pupils can

assess their own chronological skills through handling toys from different ages.

- Pupils are fascinated by the wealth of topics in relation to Black History. They thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool; as one pupil said, 'It was like opening up a whole new world for us.' Moreover, pupils have been interviewed on 'Peace FM' about their work on Mary Seacole and John Blanke.
- The Manchester Arts Education Initiative plays a major role in the delivery of history in the school: pupils have performed seven history plays and musicals at the Victorian Baths and Contact Theatre. As a result, they have produced DVDs on such topics as the Titanic disaster, the American Civil War and London in 1945.
- There is a wide range of visits to museums and historical sites and pupils speak warmly about their trips to Lark Hall Place, Bramhall Hall and the Victorian schoolroom at Portland Basin. They are required to compare and contrast what they learn during these visits with what they find out when completing their research on related topics.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is outstanding.

- The subject leader has an excellent understanding of how history should be delivered in the primary school. She leads the subject with skill and verve. Newly and recently qualified teachers in particular pay testament to the comprehensive support that they receive and to the variety of history resources that is available to them on the school intranet.
- Regular monitoring of planning, ongoing scrutiny of pupils' work and detailed tracking of progress and attainment demonstrate that teachers are held rigorously to account for their delivery of the subject, and support accurate self-evaluation.
- Within the context of the 'creative curriculum', the leader places considerable emphasis on history as a discrete subject and ensures that pupils benefit from memorable experiences through visits, drama and role play.
- Pupils' literacy development is a key aspect of history provision and adults are used most skilfully to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those identified as vulnerable and the large percentage of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. As a result, they make the same outstanding progress as their peers.

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

- ensuring that pupils further develop their understanding of why the past is often interpreted in different ways

- developing the assessment of pupils' progress towards National Curriculum Levels in order to facilitate more accurate awareness of their attainment within and across years.

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. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Jim Kidd**  
**Additional Inspector**