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Mrs J Williamson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Williamson

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 January 2011 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, pupils and a member of the governing body; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of two lessons and scrutiny of display in classrooms and in corridors.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress across the school and by the end of Year 6 attainment in history is above average. Pupils of all abilities and from all groups achieve well in the subject.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are developing good chronological skills and can place photographs in order accurately, giving convincing reasons for their estimations of the years in which they were taken.
- Older pupils, for example in Year 6, produce impressive PowerPoint presentations on the course of the Second World War and the Home Front. Their understanding of the nature of bias and also of the sources used by historians to make their judgements is, however, underdeveloped.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy history, are very keen to talk about their studies with visitors and are immensely proud of

their work, much of which is displayed prominently throughout the school. They are fully engaged in lessons and, as early as Year 1, collaborate with, and sometimes challenge, their classmates in pairs and groups with a maturity which belies their years.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are strong and pupils have a high regard for the adults who work with them. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to work in pairs and in groups, and their learning is enhanced by their willingness to act as resources for each other.
- Lesson preparation is detailed and teachers use a wide range of resources, including the electronic whiteboard, to motivate their pupils. Longer-term planning, however, does not pay sufficient attention to ensuring progression in pupils' acquisition of discrete historical skills.
- Impressive elements of teaching include the 'conscience alley' initiative in which pupils are encouraged to offer different views on a range of historical topics. Older pupils are very much at home with this approach and make perceptive comments on the positive and negative aspects of the evacuation of children at the beginning of the Second World War.
- Although the ongoing assessment in class of pupils' progress is good, the emphasis on identifying how well pupils are performing against National Curriculum benchmarks is not enough. As a result, staff awareness of the standards their pupils are reaching is not always as accurate as it could be.
- Care, guidance and support are outstanding and one-to-one support from teachers and teaching assistants is of a high order. Teaching assistants are fully involved in lessons and their questioning complements the approach of teachers and ensures that no pupils are left behind.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of pupils well and there are extensive links with other subjects, such as English, science, information and communication technology and citizenship. Much of the history curriculum is delivered through English. However, although curriculum planning does not always foster progression in historical skills acquisition, the subject retains a high profile within the school and pupils produce good-quality extended writing on a range of historical topics, such as the life of Anne Frank. The history display is of a high order and celebrates the work of pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils speak most positively of the very impressive range of enrichment activities. They enjoyed dressing up in Tudor costume during their trip to Tatton Hall and they found a visit to Eden Camp a memorable experience.

They also enjoy the variety of visitors, such as the Roman soldier and the Victorian teacher.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

Leadership and management in history are good.

- The relatively new history team, comprising representatives from all three key stages, has evaluated performance and provision in the subject well and has an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for development.
- Teachers' planning of pupils' work is monitored regularly and leaders are aware that the recently introduced assessment sheets are not yet fully embedded. They are aware, too, that there is not enough emphasis across the school on gauging pupils' attainment against national benchmarks.
- Leaders are justifiably proud of the extensive enrichment offered in history and the subsequent popularity of the subject in all years. They are working hard to maintain the profile of the subject but recognise that curriculum planning, although it is detailed and to a large extent meets pupils' inquisitiveness about the past, does not place sufficient emphasis on pupils' progressive acquisition of historical skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- placing more emphasis on planning which fosters pupils' progression in acquisition of historical skills
- further developing assessment in history against attainment target level descriptors in order to ensure greater accuracy in identifying how well pupils are doing 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 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

Jim Kidd
Additional Inspector