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Mrs A Beckett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Beckett

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 March 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 and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time, especially in developing their historical knowledge. They have a particularly good sense of period and can describe in detail key features of the periods they have studied. For example, Year 2 pupils talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about how the Victorian seaside differed from the seaside today.
- Pupils' understanding of the life in the past is enhanced through some excellent opportunities for cross-curricular work, for example on Ancient Greece or the Anglo-Saxons.
- Pupils develop good enquiry skills because teaching consistently presents history as a subject to be discovered and found out about, rather than received. This is seen, for example, in their investigations into how Dunwich has changed over time.

- Pupils are less confident in their understanding of the full range of historical skills. While they have a good sense of period, they are less confident in understanding how different periods in the past fit together.
- History makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. Their love of the subject is evident through their work and the enthusiasm with which they discuss history. Older pupils are also able to articulate why the subject is important. As one group of Year 6 pupils commented, 'if you don't know about the past, how can you know how we came to be?' Behaviour is consistently good and, when lessons are most captivating, behaviour is outstanding.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers' transmit their enthusiasm for history well and secure high levels of enjoyment and engagement from pupils in lessons. They make good use of resources, including information and communication technology and original photographs and documents, to enhance learning and build pupils' sense of historical enquiry.
- In the best lessons, planning focuses very clearly on the subject-specific skills to be developed, with the result that pupils make excellent gains in their learning. For example, in one outstanding Year 2 lesson, pupils made excellent gains as they investigated a photograph of Beatrix Potter because clear subject-specific success criteria ensured that the teacher and the pupils knew exactly which historical skills they were trying to develop. Good use of support staff was made to carefully record pupils' achievements in subject-specific skills.
- When teaching is less effective, lesson objectives do not articulate sharply enough the expected gains pupils will make in developing their historical knowledge, understanding and skills. On some occasions, lessons presented as history are focused more on other skills, such as drama, literacy or numeracy. This inhibits progress in history.
- While teachers generally plan activities to meet the needs of the whole group well, their knowledge and understanding of pupils' progress specifically in history are inconsistent. Marking does not focus sufficiently on history-specific gains.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- History's high profile in the school is reflected in high-quality display work seen in classrooms and corridors throughout the school.
- Annual 'Stop the Clock' days provide excellent opportunities for pupils to build their sense of period through cross-curricular working, for example, by designing a museum on life in Ancient Greece or through studying family history. However, on some occasions, the cross-curricular approach

to history means that learning intentions are not linked sharply enough to history-specific outcomes for pupils.

- Similarly, while some topics are covered in excellent depth, for example, the Home Front during the Second World War, other topics, for example, on the Tudors, do not devote sufficient time or attention to some of the key events of the period.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of trips and visits which plays a significant role in building pupils' sense of period. These have included trips to the RAF museum at Duxford and visits connected with the local area such as to Christchurch Mansion or the Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow.
- Systems to plan for progression in history are not in place. This hinders teachers' ability to set clear and discrete targets and to monitor robustly pupils' progress in their development of subject-specific skills.
- Staff recognise that the curriculum does not yet fully reflect the increasingly diverse backgrounds of pupils.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

Leadership and management in history are satisfactory.

- Resources, schemes of work and lesson plans are well organised and there is a good commitment among all staff to promoting pupils' love of history and their sense of historical enquiry.
- Leadership and management arrangements for history have ensured that the curriculum meets statutory requirements.
- Accurate self-evaluation has correctly identified the pressing need to strengthen the curriculum by ensuring that planning for progression in the development of the full range of subject-specific skills is fully in place. Leaders and managers recognise that this is essential to ensure that teachers and pupils have a much clearer understanding of how well pupils are doing in history and how they can improve.
- Strategies to address these areas of relative weakness are in place and scheduled to be shared with staff across the school this year, as part of the school development cycle.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- capitalising on teachers' and pupils' enjoyment of history by ensuring that:
 - the curriculum sets out clearly how pupils will make progress in developing their subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons and over time
 - lesson planning articulates consistently which history-specific skills are being developed and how success will be measured
 - improving the use of assessment so that teachers and their pupils have a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing in history and how they can improve.

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

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector