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Mr M Reed
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Reed

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 8 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Pupils enter the Reception class with skills in knowledge and understanding of the world which are generally below those expected for their age. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress in their learning across the school and reach above average standards in history by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils in Year 2 are developing independent learning skills very effectively and comment, 'In history we have to find things out for ourselves.' Their chronological skills are improving apace and they give accurate and detailed information on how the Great Fire of London began and the reasons why it spread so rapidly.

- In Year 6, pupils research their work using a range of sources and are aware of the pitfalls in evaluating evidence. They make accurate comments on both the nature and danger of bias; more able pupils discuss the value of the study of history to their everyday lives and comment that it teaches them to be fair and objective.
- History is a very popular subject in school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding and they take the initiative in producing extra work at home. Their behaviour and engagement in lessons are excellent and they enjoy learning in pairs and in groups.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- Comprehensive lesson preparation to meet the learning needs of all, challenging questions and high expectations of what pupils can achieve are the hallmarks of the teaching in history. Teachers use the electronic whiteboard most effectively as a teaching and learning tool and pupils have many opportunities in lessons to use the internet for their research.
- Teachers place considerable emphasis on encouraging pupils to empathise with figures from the past, for example by placing pupils in character when they are studying everyday life in Ancient Egypt. Pupils are also required to present their work to their peers: in a Year 4/5 lesson, for example, which comprised preparation for a visit to Manchester Museum, every pupil had made a major oral contribution by the end of the session.
- Assessment is good. Teachers ensure that learning objectives are clear and that pupils are aware of what they need to do to meet their challenging targets. Ongoing assessment in class is a strength and pupils' achievement at the end of each topic is closely considered. Staff have produced a detailed history portfolio, which outlines the range of activities in each year. They recognise, however, that the document would benefit from examples of pupils' work which have been assessed according to National Curriculum level descriptors. Marking is good and pupils receive accurate written comment on how they can improve their work.
- Teaching assistants provide most impressive care, guidance and support for their pupils. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same outstanding progress as their peers.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is outstanding.

- The themed curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to see the links between subjects but it also ensures that history has a high profile within the school. It comprises an ideal balance between knowledge and understanding and pupils' acquisition of discrete historical skills. Pupils' independent learning and personal research are the key elements of

curriculum delivery. As a result, they gain an impressive understanding of the range of sources used by historians to make their judgements.

- Pupils speak highly of the outstanding range of historical visits, which, in their words, 'We will never forget!' They were fascinated by the Viking 'dig' in York and produced a class booklet on the artefacts, coins, dice and helmets, for example, which they found. The school reinforces learning by producing DVDs on the visits and pupils have opportunities to watch the activities in which they took part.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is outstanding.

- The experienced subject leader has an accurate understanding of performance in history and is proactive in her promotion of the subject, always looking for subject-specific training opportunities. She produces a detailed self-evaluation document, which informs curriculum planning and facilitates accelerated pupil progress. For example, pupils' chronological and enquiry skills have improved markedly following the introduction of strategies to address them.
- The programme of focused lesson observations is extensive and staff receive detailed feedback on teaching quality and areas for development. Staff in all years pay tribute to the comprehensive support that they receive from the subject leader. They comment that she offers them detailed advice on curriculum delivery and, through regular joint monitoring of pupils' work, ensures that they assess pupils' attainment with accuracy.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further developing the history portfolio by including pieces of pupils' work which have been assessed according to National Curriculum guidelines.

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