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Mrs J Fionda
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fionda

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 18 May 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 you, staff and pupils; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; an analysis of pupils' work; and the observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress in developing their historical knowledge, understanding and skills from a young age, and their attainment is above average. Those in Reception, for example, have good understanding of how motorised vehicles changed over time, and they can recognise similarities and differences.
- Pupils develop their chronological understanding well through the use of timelines and through comparing aspects of the past with the present.
- Across the school, the quality of learning is good. Pupils enjoy the subject, they can confidently communicate ideas and they can make reasonable deductions about historical evidence.

- Pupils undertake a good range of independent research. They are competent in extracting relevant information from textbooks and the internet. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of everyday life for rich and poor people in Victorian Britain through such work. Some pupils are keenly aware that not all evidence is reliable.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They sustain their concentration on the tasks set, and their attitudes and behaviour are excellent.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Lessons are planned in detail and the activities set match the needs of different pupils. Appropriate outcomes are identified for groups of pupils and good use is made of a range of historical sources which pupils are encouraged to evaluate.
- Teachers use the electronic whiteboard well to introduce the work being covered. This is often followed through by work in pairs and in groups, and pupils use computers freely for their historical research.
- Pupils are encouraged to participate in answering questions in class discussions. Some are reflective of the work being covered. One Year 4 pupil, for instance, stated, 'I think Henry VIII was a nasty king because of all the beheadings he ordered and the number of people he jailed.'
- The activities set are challenging and enable all groups of pupils to make good progress. Teachers use time efficiently and make appropriate whole-class teaching points to inject pace to the learning. Classroom assistants are used effectively.
- Recap of previous learning is good and pupils have good recall of work covered. Staff give good oral feedback to the pupils.
- Lessons are characterised by a good learning environment and pupils respond well to the adults.
- Pupils' written work is regularly marked and some written feedback is given. However, the marking does not routinely identify how the work could be improved or set targets for such improvement.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- Pupils are given good opportunities to learn about and understand important aspects of history. They are given opportunities to study topics in depth, for instance the Vikings, and they gain good understanding of aspects of the past.
- The curriculum is enriched by visits to an excellent range of places. Pupils regularly visit museums, for example Melton Museum, the Black Country Museum, Rockingham Castle, Duxford Museum, and New Walk Museum in Leicester. In addition, visits are made to manor houses. Visitors are routinely invited into school to talk about aspects of history. Good links

exist with the local museums for such purposes. Pupils' enjoyment of the subject and their progress are enhanced considerably as a result.

- The curriculum is generally broad but coverage is uneven. Although the work on the Vikings is covered in depth, for instance, the planning does not give pupils an adequate overview of the Romans or Anglo-Saxons. There is some, but not enough, coverage of a world history unit.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is satisfactory.

- The subject leader has a generally sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. This is achieved largely through collaborative teaching with other teachers and through a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- The enthusiasm of individual teachers is harnessed well and good direction is provided for resources and in formulating appropriate guidance, for example in strengthening pupils' self-assessment.
- Good practice is shared by teachers and there is some good collaborative teaching by staff from different year groups.
- The monitoring and evaluation of whole-school curriculum planning, however, are limited.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the curriculum is better balanced and that the coverage of all the study units is appropriate
- ensuring that the subject leader monitors and evaluates curriculum planning more rigorously
- ensuring that marking identifies for pupils how they can improve their progress through the routine identification of appropriate targets.

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

Champak Chauhan
Additional Inspector