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Mrs R Farrell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Farrell

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 6 June 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 good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and all pupils make good progress in developing historical skills, concepts and understanding. Pupils experience a wide range of stimulating activities both inside and outside the classroom, such as how the Aztecs lived and by visiting nearby Beacon Hill with its many aspects of historical interest. Pupils are strongly encouraged to think for themselves and, at the beginning of topics, they think up questions which they then follow through carefully in their investigations.
- The constant focus on enabling pupils to generate their own questions means that the quality of critical thinking about sources is good. Pupils were able to provide some well-thought out answers to questions that required deeper reflection on aspects of history. For instance, in Year 3/4,

pupils were encouraged to ask good questions about the nature of life aboard ships in the 18th century.

- Pupils' personal development is excellent. They said that they very much enjoyed being active in lessons and working with other pupils to generate answers to questions. They were able to develop their communication skills well through discussions with partners and then feeding back to the whole class. Pupils in Years 5/6 demonstrated that they had a good grasp of how things change over time and could offer interesting evaluations as to whether there has been progress in history. Behaviour is excellent in lessons.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers have focused well on developing pupils' reflective learning skills and this is evident in the type of tasks set and the responses expected from pupils. The success of lessons is based on the good relationships teachers have with pupils. The caring environment fosters good relationships between pupils, which in turn enables pupils to be motivated to learn and discuss their ideas confidently with one another.
- Lessons engage all pupils and are based on clear learning objectives which are shared regularly with pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils are clear about what to do.
- Marking in pupils' books is good and provides them with helpful comments about how to improve their work.
- Teachers' tracking and recording of the progress groups of pupils make in developing historical skills are good. There is a clear format for indicating which skills need to be revisited and improved. Tracking of progress for individual pupils is not quite as rigorous.
- The use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' historical understanding, research and communication skills is good. Laptops were used well in a Year 1/2 lesson where some pupils had to research what life was like for pirates.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The school has developed a creative curriculum where history retains discrete time in each year group. A good programme of history topics has been developed and links are good with other subjects, such as English, art and music. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their historical learning skills in a variety of contexts in the school curriculum.
- The emphasis on developing pupils' historical thinking and communication skills is enabling them to make good progress in reading and writing.
- There is a good range of visits to places of historical interest both locally, such as the museum in Gloucester, and wider afield, such as London.

Much good use is made of the open-air classroom on Beacon Hill. Parents are regularly invited to give talks about their experiences of the past and these sessions enhance pupils' learning considerably.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- Leadership and management of history are shared effectively by two teachers, one leading for Key Stage 1 and the other for Key Stage 2. Together, they have established the place of history within the creative curriculum and have ensured that developments within the subject are discussed well by all staff. You support them very well and use your excellent history background to ensure that they are kept up to date with national history teaching developments. This means that all teachers have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of history.
- The general discussions and planning of the creative curriculum enabled history leaders to establish a general vision for the subject within the overall school curriculum rationale. A more detailed subject-specific rationale is still to be completed.
- Subject evaluation and development planning are good.
- The curriculum is planned well within the creative curriculum and the mapping of the progression of history skills and concepts is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring tighter tracking of individual pupils' progress
- completing a more detailed rationale for teaching history to complement and expand the subject's general vision statement currently embedded in the creative curriculum policy.

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

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector