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Mrs H Horne
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Horne

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 27 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 three lessons. There was also a visit to a dramatic performance entitled 'Puck', delivered by pupils in Years 5 and 6.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupil's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage in literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world are below, and in some years well below, age-related expectations. However, all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well across the school to reach broadly average attainment in history by the end of Year 6.
- From as early as the nursery class, pupils are using 'time words' such as 'after' and 'before.' Their chronological skills are developing well as a result of presentations about their families when they use a range of photographs to demonstrate the passage of time.
- Pupils acquire historical skills at a good rate across Key Stages 1 and 2. For example, in Years 1 and 2, they make accurate comments about entertainment past and present when they consider sources on excursions

to Blackpool in the early 19th century and compare them with recent holiday photographs. By Year 6, pupils interpret and interrogate source material, for example increasingly complex census information on the local area. However, the school recognises that pupils do not always see the links between the different topics that they are studying in relation to change and continuity.

- Pupils' personal development in history is good and, on occasions, outstanding. They enjoy history, behave well and are generally fully engaged in their learning. They are proud to show their work to visitors and value the opportunities they have to append their photographs onto the large timeline on the corridor.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and pass onto their pupils their own enjoyment of history. Teachers often join in activities to support the pupils' learning, for example during the impressive dramatic production of 'Puck', when pupils devised their own freeze frames to illustrate a variety of Shakespeare plays.
- Relationships between pupils and, between pupils and the adults who work with them, are positive. Pupils have many opportunities to work in pairs and groups and thus to act as extra learning resources for each other. Pupils are delighted when their peers succeed, such as in an outstanding Reception class lesson, when children listened with rapt attention to the presentations of their peers. Challenge is realistic overall and is demonstrated by sophisticated questioning, which requires pupils to think more deeply about the subject matter. There were some quite perceptive answers in Years 5 and 6 to the question 'Why might there have been no male servants living in the hall at this time?'
- Assessment is good overall and teachers are currently reviewing a variety of initiatives which have been introduced over the past 12 months, such as marking ladders. They recognise that a further development of skills-based assessment is of the essence to ensure focused lesson planning which meets the learning needs of all more closely. Marking is good overall. The best offers pupils detailed advice on how they can improve their work and includes 'I tasks', which are designed to challenge pupils further in their thinking.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum ensures that history has a high profile within school and it meets the needs and interests of pupils well. Indeed, many pupils say that history is their favourite subject.
- The history elements of the creative approach to curriculum delivery are founded on a close consideration of how pupils' acquisition of discrete

historical skills may be promoted. Pupils themselves are consulted about what they wish to find out about individual topics and their motivation to learn is enhanced as a result. The curriculum is under continuous review and teachers are now considering how they can ensure that pupils are better able to see the links between different historical topics.

- There is a good range of enrichment activities, including visits and visitors, and pupils value the emphasis placed on local study. Pupils speak highly of their visits to the Harris Museum and to Skipton Castle.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject coordinator is proactive in ensuring that her colleagues are well informed about recent developments in the teaching and learning of history. She provides good strategic direction for the development of the subject and, as a result, teachers of all levels of experience and responsibility believe that they are supported well. They also comment that their views are listened to and that their contributions valued.
- There are regular lesson observations to gauge the quality of teaching and learning, and book scrutiny plays an important role in gauging pupils' progress and attainment. There are annual evaluations of the effectiveness of the delivery of the subject and the school is supported effectively by the local authority history specialist, who is currently working with staff on the development of skills-based assessment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to develop the curriculum to ensure that pupils are better able to see the links between the topics that they are studying, particularly in relation to change and continuity
- embedding the skills-based approach to assessment to facilitate focused planning to meet the learning needs of pupils even more closely.

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