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14 July 2011

Mrs A Wilks  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Wilks

### **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 4 July 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; observation of four lessons; and a visit to a rehearsal of 'Through the Decades', a play written by Years 5 and 6 following their work on Britain since 1948.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

#### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with low skills in literacy and in knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress and achieve well across the school to reach broadly average attainment in history by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a good understanding of the career of Blackbeard the Pirate and use historical terminology accurately and in context, 'plunder' for example. In Years 3 and 4, they read complex texts on characteristics of the five main independent Ancient Greek states and make accurate comments on the values and beliefs held by different peoples.

- In Years 5 and 6, pupils interpret a variety of photographs on the Miners' Strike with accuracy and give reasoned arguments about the relative merits of the views of the government and of the National Union of Mineworkers. They are aware that sources are not always trustworthy, however, their understanding of how historians make their judgements is underdeveloped.
- Pupils' personal development in history is outstanding. Many say that history is their favourite subject and their behaviour and engagement in the subject-matter during lessons are of the highest order. They have a high regard for their teachers and for the other adults who work with them. They value the opportunities they have to express their views on what they would like to learn and were delighted when their teachers introduced a topic on world records.

### **Quality of teaching in history**

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- In the best lessons, such as an outstanding session on the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece, expectations are high and realistic challenge enables pupils of all abilities to reach the standards of which they are capable. The school recognises, however, that the challenge for more able pupils is not always consistent across the school.
- Lesson preparation is detailed and demonstrates teachers' secure subject and pedagogical knowledge. For example, teachers recognise the benefits which accrue when pupils are given opportunities to act as extra learning resources for each other. As a result, pupils work well in groups and enjoy challenging and learning from each other. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are fascinated when they discuss the possibility that the American moon landings in 1960 were an elaborate hoax.
- Ongoing assessment in class is good and teachers regularly amend their approach to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. However, staff are aware that a more formal system of assessment is of the essence if both pupils and teachers are to recognise more clearly the progress that pupils are making over time in the acquisition of discrete historical skills.

### **Quality of the curriculum in history**

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- History operates as part of the creative curriculum, but the school fully meets the national requirements for the subject. The emphasis is on pupils learning through enquiry and through first-hand experiences.
- Curriculum planning in history is good and has pupils' acquisition of discrete historical skills as its starting point. The curriculum is under continuous review and staff are currently examining ways to ensure that pupils acquire chronological skills more effectively in Key Stage 1.
- The wide range of enrichment activities includes visits, visitors and historical theme days. Pupils are often immersed in history, for example

when they act out the Battle of Bosworth Field and play an active part in a Tudor banquet. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are currently hard at work preparing for their production of 'Through the Decades', which is a direct result of their study of Britain since 1948.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in history**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- Leaders provide teachers with an historical skills-based overview of what is required in all key stages and non-specialist teachers speak positively of the support and advice that they receive on how learning in history can best be promoted. The school has an accurate view of performance in history, as a result of monitoring planning, work scrutiny and regular lesson observations.
- Leaders ensure that teachers' and pupils' use of new technology is a key element in history provision and they emphasise the importance of pupils finding things out for themselves. Pupils' positive views of history in the school demonstrate the success leaders continue to have in ensuring that the subject has a high profile.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- focusing more on pupils' acquisition of chronological skills in Key Stage 1
- sharing good practice in the challenge for more able pupils, particularly in relation to how historians make their judgements, to enable them to make greater progress overall
- continuing to develop more formal assessment strategies so that pupils and teachers are fully aware of the progress pupils are making in their acquisition of discrete historical skills.

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**