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Mrs A Normington  
Headteacher  
Ogbourne St George and St Andrew Church of  
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High Street  
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Dear Mrs Normington

### **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 28 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; and analysis of pupils' work. History was not being taught on the day but a learning walk was undertaken covering all classes.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

#### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress and standards of attainment are above average.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of features of life in different historical periods. For example, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 could explain confidently and knowledgeably about people's experiences of the home front during the Second World War. They demonstrated good understanding of the blitz, blackouts, evacuation and the changing role of women during the war.
- Chronological understanding is also developing well across the school, especially within each individual enquiry where pupils gain a strong sense

of period and deep understanding of key people, events and changes. However, some pupils are less secure when trying to accurately sequence different historical periods across a larger expanse of time.

- Pupils are able to reach reasoned conclusions concerning the significance of the various aspects of history which they study. However, pupils' understanding of historical interpretations and their skills of assessing the usefulness of historical evidence are less secure.
- History makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. They say how much they enjoy history because 'it is fun to learn about the way that things were different in the past'. History is used effectively to engender a passion for learning as well as to support pupils' good literacy skills.

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

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Although no teaching was observed, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of work reveal that learning activities are planned well to meet the needs of all pupils through a variety of challenging and engaging tasks.
- History makes a strong contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Scrutiny of pupils' books showed many opportunities for pupils to use history to develop their extended writing skills for a range of audiences and purposes. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 produced good examples of a recount of their experience of a day in a Victorian school.
- Detailed planning shows that teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils should learn by the end of each lesson. However, learning goals and written comments in books are not always sufficiently focused on assessing historical skills and providing pupils with sharp pointers for making better progress.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The quality of history within the curriculum has significant strengths because it is supported by well-planned cross-curricular and cross-phase links. These links enable pupils to gain a strong sense of place and period and develop good knowledge which, in turn, support them to make increasingly sophisticated connections between themes and subjects.
- Teachers are supported well by detailed planning and good teaching ideas. However, the opportunities for teachers to access a full range of resources, especially historical artefacts, to support programmes of study have not been fully exploited.
- The school makes good use of visits and enrichment activities to capture pupils' imagination. Pupils say how much they appreciate the rich opportunities available to enhance their learning. For example, pupils particularly enjoyed their day as evacuees in period costume and their

journey on board a steam train. The comment of one pupil, captured the feelings of many when she said, 'it really brought history to life for me'.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- Since your appointment as the headteacher, you have worked closely and effectively with the subject leader to develop history successfully across the school. Together, you demonstrate a clear commitment to the importance of history in the primary curriculum.
- Although only in role since September 2010, the subject leader has demonstrated good capacity to develop the subject more widely. Effective self-evaluation results in a good understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development.
- The subject leader has recently set out expected levels of progression in pupils' understanding of key historical concepts and processes. Consequently, teachers are now beginning to plan and assess more rigorously for the development of pupils' progress in these wider historical skills. However, there has been insufficient time to see the full impact of this work and the school is focusing on embedding these changes.

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

- ensuring that pupils' wider historical skills are more coherently and consistently developed across the school by:
  - embedding and making explicit the recently defined approach to planning for progression in pupils' understanding of these skills
  - ensuring that pupils' progress in the development of historical skills is monitored and evaluated more rigorously
  - enabling pupils to develop their historical skills through the handling and use of artefacts
  - ensuring that assessment opportunities provide pupils with sharp pointers on how to improve their work in history.

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

**Karl Sampson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**