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14 July 2011

Mr C Errington
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Errington

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 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; 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 pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing their historical skills and understanding. Pupils undertake interesting and stimulating research activities, such as finding out about how children were treated in Victorian schools.
- Teachers encourage pupils to ask good questions about the topics they are studying and the resources they are given to look at.
- Pupils' personal development in history is excellent. Pupils say that they think history is 'exciting and you can act parts to make you see how people felt in those days'. They like learning about their local area and about the Second World War. They enjoy comparing the past with the present and finding out about how the way they live now has been influenced by the past.

- Behaviour is excellent in lessons. Pupils are growing in confidence and speak to the class with increasing fluency as they progress through the school.
- Pupils talk knowledgeably about the topics they learn, and have a good understanding of the importance of basing their ideas on available evidence. They like viewing history videos, and pooling their ideas in groups. Pupils find it very helpful to access work on the school's portal from home.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers develop good relationships with pupils. Lessons are planned very well to ensure that the needs of all pupils are taken into account and that all pupils can engage in the activities. Lessons are lively and pupils talk enthusiastically about their ideas. Teachers give pupils time to expand on their views when answering verbal questions, but opportunities are sometimes missed to enable all pupils to develop their writing skills in lessons.
- Marking is good in pupils' books and indicates how they can improve their work. In lessons, teachers communicate their expectations to pupils well and give appropriate praise to those who meet their objectives. The monitoring of progress for individual pupils in skills' development is good.
- The use of information and communication technology, to develop pupils' understanding of topics and enhance their presentations to the class, is excellent.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the history curriculum is good.

- The curriculum has been reviewed and changed recently from one where history retained a distinctive slot in the curriculum to one where it appears within wider themes. The school is aware that pupils' understanding and grasp of chronology and the sense of the past might be diluted as a result. It intends to review this situation carefully at the end of the year. In other respects, the curriculum is planned well so that history provides a context for study in a number of subjects, such as English and art.
- There is good emphasis on developing pupils' history skills. Pupils know how to ask good questions about sources and are developing their understanding of key history concepts such as change over time.
- The school organises an excellent range of visits to places of historical importance locally and regionally and also invites local historians and others to talk to the pupils about their experiences in the past. Pupils have been involved in exciting local history projects. They say how much they enjoy these projects.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of history is good.

- The subject leader is well qualified as a teacher of history and has a good grasp of the importance of history in the school curriculum. She is supported well by other teachers with whom she shares good ideas for improvement. The quality of documentation, including the rationale for history, is good.
- The school has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of subject provision in the school.
- Although time has been created for teachers to review the quality of provision for history in the school, this has not yet extended to enable the subject leader to regularly observe her colleagues teaching.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all pupils have appropriate opportunities to improve their writing skills in history
- making sure that the thematic curriculum preserves the place of history so that it is clear how pupils will develop the required concepts and a grasp of chronology in the subject
- enabling the subject leader to monitor the quality of teaching in history on a more regular basis.

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