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15 July 2011

Mr R Fox  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Fox

### **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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

#### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- Attainment in history is above average and, by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of life in different historical periods. For example, younger pupils could describe and explain aspects of life in Tudor times. Older pupils spoke confidently and knowledgeably about the work that they had done on the Second World War.
- Pupils' chronological understanding is well developed. They could accurately sequence images of homes in the past and older pupils talked about the passage of time and why this should be represented on time lines.
- Pupils have good research and enquiry skills. They particularly enjoy being asked at the start of a topic what they know and what they would like to

find out. Older pupils commented that this approach helped make history more interesting and engaging.

- However, some variation remains in pupils' attainment across the full range of historical skills. For example, pupils are unsure about how evidence might be checked for accuracy or how history can be interpreted in different ways.
- The contribution of history to pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are enthusiastic and inquisitive and say that 'history is brill'. They are convinced of the importance of learning about the past because, in the words of a Year 6 pupil, 'we need to know where we have come from'.

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

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Lessons are carefully planned and learning is matched to pupils' needs. Displays celebrate pupils' achievements and the range of activities adopted.
- A particularly effective feature of the good teaching is the incisive questioning by teachers which extends pupils' historical knowledge and understanding well.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers use digital projectors and whiteboards well and pupils use ICT regularly to support their learning.
- Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and teachers give praise. Comments are helpful but they are too general and do not always include subject-specific advice on how pupils can improve their work.
- Pupils' work is assessed according to National Curriculum levels of attainment. However, assessing progress in subject-specific skills is underdeveloped. As a result, teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of how well pupils are developing the full range of subject-specific skills. This helps to explain why pupils are less confident in evaluating historical evidence than they are in pursuing historical enquiries.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets requirements. Pupils explore an appropriate range of topics each year which enables them to learn about important aspects of local, national and international history.
- Cross-curricular links are strong and work in history makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- The curriculum is being revised to make it more creative. Teachers recognise the importance of making sure that the subject retains its identity and integrity within the emerging curriculum framework.

- Pupils benefit from a good range of enrichment activities. Places regularly visited include Shibden Hall, the Thackray Museum and Eden Camp. These events are linked closely to the schemes of work and to activities in the classroom. Pupils say how much these visits help their learning.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- History is well organised and well resourced. Planning is thorough in all year groups.
- The subject coordinator provides good support for her colleagues and teachers work well as a team.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in history. The three-year development plan has appropriate objectives.
- Professional subject-specific training for teachers has not taken place for several years. Although links with a neighbouring high school are in place, such collaboration has not yet been exploited to update teachers' knowledge and understanding of some of the more recent developments in the subject.

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

- ensuring that pupils' wider historical skills are more thoroughly developed across the school and that pupils' progress in the development of the full range of historical skills is monitored and evaluated more rigorously
- developing marking and written feedback to ensure that pupils are given precise subject-specific advice on how they can improve their work
- making better use of local networks and clusters to ensure that staff update their knowledge and understanding in the subject through relevant professional development.

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

**Michael Maddison**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**