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Mrs C McFarlane
Headteacher
Stoke St Michael Primary School
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Dear Mrs McFarlane

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; and analysis of pupils' work. History was not being taught on the day of the visit.

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are broadly average.
- They show a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of different periods of the past. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 talked confidently about the work of Florence Nightingale in caring for the wounded in the Crimea while those in Years 3 and 4 showed a firm grasp of key features of the evacuation of children during the Second World War.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of chronology. Those in Years 3 and 4 were able to sequence images of homes in the past accurately, although they were less confident in handling the intervals between different historical periods.
- Pupils in the Key Stage 2 class make appropriate deductions, for example from images of Viking artefacts. However, they are less confident in

evaluating sources and less secure in their understanding of how the past can be interpreted in different ways.

- Pupils enjoy their work in history and it makes a good contribution to their personal development. Those interviewed in Years 3 and 4 were pleased with the opportunities for creative work linked with the subject.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- Teachers share an enthusiasm for the subject and its contribution to the curriculum. Planning shows that most lessons provide opportunities for pupils to engage in activities to build historical understanding appropriately, although learning objectives for history are not sharply focused.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning, with pupils using the internet often to research information and presentation software facilitating the communication of their findings.
- Teachers' marking is thorough but seldom identifies ways in which pupils might improve their work in history, focusing instead mainly on pupils' success in achieving the literacy objectives often underpinning activities.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is based on a firm commitment to offering pupils engaging activities through cross-curricular topics where links between subjects are exploited appropriately.
- Relevant visits and visitors enhance the curriculum and deepen pupils' understanding, for example the visits to Bath and Wookey Hole.
- Suitable topic cycles are in place for each class. However, the school has correctly identified the need for a detailed review to set out the best opportunities for developing particular historical skills and understanding and to check progression and coverage of the programmes of study.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is satisfactory.

- Leadership and management of the subject are a shared endeavour in this small school. Staff plan and review topics together and discuss pupils' progress.
- Your monitoring has focused mainly on English and mathematics but history-related work has been observed as part of literacy sessions. This, together with informal visits to classrooms and the staff's collegiate approach, results in a broadly accurate view of the subject's strengths and areas for development.

- A new rolling programme has been established that sets out when subjects are in focus for review and development. History is identified for this review in the autumn of 2011.
- Teachers' assessments provide a clear view of pupils' attainment at the end of each year but further analysis, for example to compare pupils' performance over time, is not routinely carried out.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- identifying the best opportunities for developing particular historical skills and understanding as part of the forthcoming curriculum review in order to assist in focusing teachers' planning
- sharpening the learning objectives for history to help teachers to provide more subject-focused guidance for pupils on how to do better
- providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in evaluating historical sources and their understanding of how the past can be interpreted in different ways.

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

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector