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Mrs K Gauld
Headteacher
Hillside Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gauld

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 16 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, pupils and parents; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and six lesson observations.

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- Overall, standards are average and pupils make satisfactory progress. Progress in lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to good, and some pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject and are able to recall the work that they have done. For example, Year 2 pupils spoke about the Great Fire and Pepys' reflections upon it.
- Pupils' personal development is good. In discussion, younger pupils understood the implications of the use of child labour in coal mines during the Industrial Revolution and older pupils were very clear about the achievements of Nelson Mandela.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and have a good knowledge of the topics they teach. They are keen for pupils to do well and this is acknowledged by the pupils. Classroom management is good and pupils' behaviour is outstanding.
- Teachers have changed the way they teach to enable pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Pupils are encouraged to pose more questions and to research answers. This is having a positive effect but lessons are still too structured around issues identified by teachers.
- Lessons are generally pitched at a level suitable for most, but not all, pupils. As a result, some pupils do not make sufficient progress.
- Teachers give insufficient attention to ensuring progression year-by-year in the teaching of historical knowledge, understanding and skills. This adversely affects pupils' progress.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum covers the National Curriculum and also develops good links with other subjects. It is relevant to pupils because links are made to contemporary issues affecting their lives.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given good opportunities to study history-related topics.
- There are a good number of visits and visitors to school covering issues of historical interest.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- There is recent, effective self-evaluation of the subject and this is beginning to have good impact. It has led to the development of an interesting, new curriculum to begin in September 2011.
- There have also been recent changes in teaching styles as well as good, ongoing improvements in assessment including tracking. These have been developed to support improvements in standards and to help pupils make good progress in the subject. There is strong evidence that the innovations are already beginning to do this.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further refinement of the assessment system to support improvements in achievement
- monitoring teaching to ensure that it provides progression in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding

- ensuring that teaching meets the needs of all pupils.

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

Paul Armitage
Additional Inspector