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Mrs P Kerton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kerton

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 22 September 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.

- All pupils make good progress and attain standards that are above average.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of features of life in different historical periods. For example, Year 4 pupils can explain confidently and accurately about life in Ancient Egypt. They recognise that the Egyptians' lives might be interpreted differently according to whether rich or poor people were the focus of study.
- Chronological understanding is developed well within each individual topic. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, regular opportunities to discuss time sequence words and routines and how people change over time provide a good foundation for later work in history. However, some older pupils are

less secure when trying to accurately sequence different historical periods across a larger expanse of time.

- Pupils understand that knowledge about the past can be built up using different types of evidence, such as artefacts, books, websites and diary entries. However, they are less secure in evaluating the usefulness of historical sources available for different periods.
- History makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and their enthusiasm and enjoyment is palpable. Pupils particularly enjoy finding out about the past for themselves through handling artefacts, posing their own questions and discussing their ideas.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers and pupils share a great enthusiasm for the subject. History is presented as an organic subject, best explored and investigated by pupils. This was a key feature in the two lessons that were observed and pupils said how much they enjoy this approach.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils should learn by the end of the lesson. Detailed and tailored planning supported by good dialogue between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Classroom displays are designed well to enable pupils to get a sense of period and good opportunities exist for pupils to celebrate their finished work. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 demonstrated a good understanding of the significance and impact of key figures from the Victorian era by engaging the rest of the school with their own 'Great Exhibition'.
- Teachers' marking is evaluative and encouraging but too often focuses on the development of literacy skills at the expense of developing historical skills. The school has recognised the need to provide pupils with sharp pointers for making better progress and developing good young historians.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The school has implemented a two-year rolling programme of history topics which incorporates a whole-school approach to the development of a creative and thematic curriculum. This approach is supported by well-planned cross-curricular and cross-phase links which are enabling pupils to develop their knowledge well and make increasingly sophisticated connections between themes and subjects.
- The good range of visits and visitors makes a significant contribution to the interest and engagement of pupils. The school has forged excellent partnerships with external providers to develop history teaching through creative arts and drama.

- Much useful work is undertaken in partnership with local museums and pupils say how much they value handling the range of artefacts brought in to support their learning. However, the school recognises that opportunities for pupils to study local history have not been fully exploited.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The curriculum team has a clear commitment to the importance of history in the primary curriculum. Teachers are supported well by detailed planning and good teaching resources and ideas.
- Effective self-evaluation means that understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development is good. The deputy headteacher and the curriculum team work well together and there is a clear pattern of monitoring to secure improvement in the subject.
- The curriculum team 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 are monitored and evaluated more rigorously
 - ensuring that assessment opportunities provide pupils with sharp pointers on how to improve their work in history.
- exploiting relevant local history opportunities to broaden and deepen pupils' experiences and understanding.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector