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Mr M Geraghty
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Geraghty

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 2 November 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 you, staff and pupils; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; an analysis of pupils' work; and the observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress in developing their historical knowledge, understanding and skills because of the good teaching and learning they experience. As a result, they attain standards which are appropriate for their ages. Pupils in Year 2, for example, have good knowledge of the lives of Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole and can draw parallels and differences between the two, while those in Year 6 have good understanding of the working lives of children in Victorian times.
- At all ages, pupils work confidently with a good range of historical sources. They are able to think critically about them and make relevant deductions.
- The higher attainers write extensively, and they can write for different audiences and for different purposes. However, many pupils use incorrect

spelling, grammar and punctuation. The presentation of their written work is not always of a high enough standard.

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are outstanding. They work well with each other and with adults, and they sustain their concentration on the tasks set. Pupils are curious about the past and they enjoy studying the subject. Many older pupils stated that they found the subject 'fascinating'. Many have undertaken in-depth research, for example about aspects of the Second World War.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- The emphasis on developing pupils' skills in historical enquiry is good. They are encouraged to use a wide range of historical sources.
- Lessons are characterised by a good learning environment. Pupils undertake research work, ask questions, are given good oral feedback, and are well managed. Time is used efficiently.
- Teachers make the subject exciting for the pupils and arouse their curiosity through interesting ways of presenting evidence. For instance, pupils in Years 3 and 4 ask relevant questions and make deductions about artefacts found in a suitcase from the 1920s.
- In some outstanding practice, an archaeologist came into the lesson to talk about her work. Pupils had prepared questions for her which she answered in some detail with the help of artefacts and equipment. One pupil recorded the interview on a camcorder for further reflection by the whole class. The pupils were enthralled by this work. Pupils' work is routinely marked and some helpful comments are made. Pupils understand the targets set for them and are aware of how to improve their work.
- The planning is generally detailed and the needs of different abilities are identified. However, specific targets for some groups, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are gifted historians, are not routinely identified in the short-term planning.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets requirements. Pupils study appropriate topics based on local, national and world events. This is combined with opportunities for in-depth research when appropriate.
- The curriculum is enriched by visits to places of historical interest, for example Erewash Museum and Nottingham Castle. Visitors are regularly invited into school to talk about aspects of the past and the pupils value this.
- Work in local history is being extended well by investigating the lives of people buried in the local cemetery.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The two subject coordinators provide good leadership and direction to the subject. There is a common sense of purpose.
- The subject is embedded well within the school curriculum and there is a clear rationale for it. Planning is undertaken jointly by all staff and monitored by the subject coordinators.
- The subject coordinators also help moderate pupils' work in history to gain an oversight of standards. They do not yet regularly observe lessons but the school is addressing this in its current improvement plan.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils' skills in writing are enhanced through their learning of history
- ensuring that short-term planning is strengthened by the identification of specific targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who are gifted historians.

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

Champak Chauhan
Additional Inspector