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Mrs D Abbott
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Abbott

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 12 January 2012 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. A learning walk was also undertaken to look at displays in the school and a visit was made to the mixed Reception and Year 1 class.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Attainment in history is broadly average and most pupils make good progress over time in developing their knowledge and understanding of features of life in different historical periods.
- Pupils develop good enquiry skills. They enjoy the frequent opportunities they are given to ask questions and undertake research. Older pupils noted that this approach helped to make history more interesting because, in the words of one pupil, 'it's more exciting when you find it out for yourself'.

- Pupils' chronological understanding is being developed well. Timelines are prominent in most classrooms and pupils could accurately sequence images of homes in the past.
- Development of the full range of pupils' historical skills is uneven. They struggled to explain how evidence might be checked for accuracy. In addition, their skills of analysing and interpreting evidence, and their understanding of how and why people interpret the past in different ways, are underdeveloped.
- The contribution of history to pupils' personal development is good. They are well motivated and inquisitive about the past. They are engaged in their learning and say that 'history is fun'.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Lessons are carefully planned and benefit from teachers' imaginative approaches to learning and their enthusiasm for history. Learning is matched to pupils' needs. This helps to explain pupils' interest and good progress.
- Questioning is good and prompts pupils to think. Good use is made of information and communication technology. Displays celebrate pupils' achievements and the range of activities adopted.
- Teachers' marking is evaluative and encouraging. However, sometimes feedback to pupils focuses on the development of literacy skills at the expense of developing historical skills.
- Teachers do not yet have a thorough enough understanding of how well pupils are developing their subject-specific skills because the new assessment procedures are not yet sufficiently embedded.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets requirements. It has been skilfully planned not only to maximise the impact of teachers' own expertise and enthusiasm and to ensure coverage of an appropriate range of topics, but also to meet the challenge created by uneven numbers in different year groups and the need for mixed-age classes.
- The curriculum is being revised with a focus on themes which will incorporate discrete subjects within a cross-curricular structure. Teachers recognise the importance of making sure that the subject retains its identity and integrity within the emerging curriculum framework.
- Rich opportunities to visit sites of historical interest and museums are matched by enrichment opportunities within school, such as the Tudor Day, which are much enjoyed and help deepen pupils' sense of period.

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.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the humanities action plan articulates clearly the next steps needed to secure further improvement.
- The subject coordinator has only been in post for a short period. Nevertheless, she leads the subject with skill and commitment. She provides good support for her colleagues who work well as a team.
- Professional subject-specific training for teachers in history is underdeveloped. Local networks and clusters have not yet been exploited to improve provision and outcomes by updating teachers on 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
- embedding the new assessment procedures to ensure that pupils' progress in the development of their historical knowledge and skills is assessed consistently and monitored and evaluated rigorously
- using local networks and clusters to help staff update their knowledge and understanding through relevant professional development.

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

Michael Maddison
Her Majesty's Inspector