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Mrs L Aird
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Aird

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 6 March 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; observation of three lessons and a meeting with the local authority link adviser.

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- Attainment on entry is broadly average and pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school so that their attainment by the end of Year 6 remains broadly average. No discernible difference is shown between the performance of different groups of pupils.
- Pupils' historical skills are developed adequately at both Key Stage 1 and 2. Pupils are aware that we know about the past through written and other forms of evidence but they are less sure about how to assess the validity and reliability of sources.
- Pupils' writing skills are being developed satisfactorily through the study of history. More able pupils can write at greater length than their peers but the level of challenge to enable all pupils in Years 5 and 6 to write in an

extended form is limited. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are being developed satisfactorily through history.

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They work well together in pairs and small groups and the majority can work well on their own. They sustain their focus on the tasks set when engaged fully in the activities.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- A reasonable range of learning activities is planned for the different abilities of the pupils. Good practice is evident in lessons, but the tracking and recording of pupils' progress in developing key historical skills is limited.
- Teachers use good quick-fire questions to elicit accurate responses from pupils, but sometimes opportunities are missed to allow them time to reflect and to give reasons for their answers.
- Pupils say that they enjoy their learning when tasks are stimulating, such as when they investigate artefacts to see how household appliances have changed over time.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly but too few comments are given to enable pupils to know how well they are making progress in understanding key historical concepts.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- The creative curriculum meets requirements for history. Pupils study an appropriate range of topics, although some of the themes stretch the history content too thinly.
- The creative curriculum provides many opportunities for history aspects to be addressed when pupils are studying topics when history is not a specific focus. However, the development of different forms of writing about history and events remains undeveloped.
- Pupils enjoy history and find the local history aspects interesting. They particularly liked visiting the chocolate factory in Birmingham.
- The mapping and recording of pupils' progress in the development of their historical skills is at an early stage. As a result, teachers' plans do not identify clearly enough how the skills are to be developed across the topics studied.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is satisfactory.

- The subject leader provides satisfactory leadership and direction for the subject. She has an adequate understanding of requirements and is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject.

- The subject leader monitors provision through discussions with staff and scrutinising pupils' work when appropriate. However, she does not undertake enough formal observations of lessons.
- Adequate documentation is in place for the subject and appropriate history topic plans have been drawn up.
- Opportunities for formal assessments of pupils' understanding and knowledge of history are limited and the moderation of teacher assessments is only just being made more rigorous.
- The subject leader has not been able to attend any training in history for several years.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring greater rigour in tracking and recording pupils' progression in developing historical skills and concepts
- providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their history writing skills, and especially extended writing in Years 5 and 6
- improving the moderation of assessments in history so that teachers gain in confidence and accuracy in making their judgements about individual pupils' progress.

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

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector