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Mrs J Branch
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Branch

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 2 July 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 you, staff and pupils; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; an analysis of pupils' work; and the observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding and attain standards that meet the expectations for their ages due to good teaching. Those in Year 4, for example, are developing their knowledge and understanding of life in Ancient Greece well.
- Pupils have good chronological understanding. They are aware of changes over long periods of time and know about changes during particular periods, for instance the Victorian era.
- Some pupils work well with historical sources and are able to ask appropriate questions about them. They can think critically about history and can confidently communicate ideas, both orally and in writing. They are highly curious about the past.

- Overall, however, pupils' historical skills are not as well developed as their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils write well for different audiences and for different purposes. Most pupils can write empathetically and those in Key Stage 2 can write competent newspaper accounts of particular historical events.
- Pupils enjoy learning history. They talk enthusiastically about work they have covered in lessons and the historical places they have visited. Their attitudes and behaviour are excellent, and they maintain their concentration on the activities set.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers plan lessons well and promote good enquiry-based approaches to learning. They know the needs of the pupils well and encourage pupils to work in pairs and in small groups, which the pupils value.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and successfully encourage all pupils to be keen historical investigators.
- The activities set are appropriate to the needs of the different abilities. Additional adults are used efficiently to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are fully engaged in their learning and they use a wide range of resources and approaches in lessons.
- Teachers mark work regularly and make helpful comments so that the pupils can improve their work. The comments are valued by the pupils. A relatively new system for tracking pupils' progress is being implemented well.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad and meets legal requirements. The school is reviewing its curriculum and implementing a topic-based approach with a greater focus on developing independent learning.
- Good opportunities are provided to study different themes and issues across time and these are combined well with in-depth studies, for example about aspects of the Second World War. This fits in well with the school's emphasis on the study of local history and its proximity to, for instance, the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.
- Pupils' interest in the subject is greatly enhanced by visits to a wide range of historical places. This includes Peterborough Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum and the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, the Globe Theatre in London and Stibbington Centre where aspects of Victorian Britain can be studied in detail. A good range of visitors, including local residents, also regularly come into school to talk about aspects of history.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject coordinator for history left at Christmas 2011 and the school is reviewing the roles and responsibilities of all staff. Nevertheless, the subject has continued to benefit from clear leadership and direction. Staff value the subject and have a common sense of purpose.
- Strengths and weaknesses in the subject are well known through a process in which senior leaders scrutinise pupils' work and the teachers' planning, listen to the views of pupils and observe lessons. The quality of planning is being strengthened as a result and greater emphasis has been placed on improving the quality of pupils' learning.
- Staff are enthusiastic historians but they have not had recent and relevant professional development in the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening the teaching and learning of a wider range of historical skills
- ensuring that staff keep abreast of developments in the subject through more regular 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

Champak Chauhan
Additional Inspector