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Mrs L Bazeley
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Dear Mrs Bazeley

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 25 June 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 four lessons. All of the lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy history and make outstanding progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding. Consequently, they reach high levels of attainment by the end of Year 6.
- High-quality teaching and an excellent curriculum combine to ensure that pupils have highly developed subject-specific skills. They are keen and adept historical enquirers and are skilled at evaluating and judging the relative value of a range of historical evidence. Pupils articulate very confidently their well-considered opinions, for example, on whether it was right for some countries to boycott the Moscow Olympics in 1980.
- 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.

- Pupils' sense of period is strengthened through regular exposure to artefacts and an excellent range of sources of evidence in lessons. Well-planned opportunities for innovative and imaginative cross-curricular working underpin this.
- Pupils are developing effective research skills and demonstrate a good understanding of changes and continuity. They use historical terms accurately and demonstrate clear strengths in the ability to draw thoughtful inferences from historical sources. However, their wider historical skills, such as interpretation, are not as well developed.
- History makes an outstanding 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 in pairs and groups.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- Teachers use resources in a highly imaginative way to create learning activities which stimulate pupils' interest and excite them. In one lesson, Year 1 pupils enjoyed handling a superb set of artefacts as they tried to deduce similarities and differences between modern homes with those in the past. In another lesson, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils devised some high-quality questions for a hot-seating exercise with two 'visiting' Athenians and two 'visiting' Spartans.
- Teaching consistently challenges pupils to think for themselves and to draw their own conclusions. In Year 2, for example, pupils used images from the London Olympics in 1908 and 1948, alongside images of athletics in 2012 to draw inferences, classify and make judgements about the type and significance of any identified change and continuity.
- Assessment is strong and teachers are now working on developing procedures which will give them an even more accurate view of how well pupils are acquiring increasingly complex historical skills as they move through the school.
- Marking is thorough and focuses well on the development of subject-specific skills as well as linking to other areas such as literacy, when appropriate. Pupils are routinely encouraged to respond to their teachers' marking. This is most effective when teachers pose a thinking question to which pupils have to respond.
- The support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is excellent. Teaching assistants and teachers work extremely well together so that learning activities and support are well matched to pupils' needs. Consequently, these pupils are able to develop their confidence to contribute fully to class discussion and achieve as well as their peers.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is outstanding.

- The curriculum is creative, distinctive and highly imaginative. It is built around enquiry-led questions which are used well to consistently drive learning forward. Consequently, history is a subject to be explored and investigated. This ensures that lessons are exciting and innovative but suffused with historical rigour at their core.
- Schemes of work articulate extremely clearly how the curriculum will develop pupils' subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons and over time. This aspect of the school's work is excellent. As a result, all staff have a strong understanding of what pupils are expected to achieve and what pupils need to do to improve. The quality of thought and depth of planning makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning and helps to explain why lessons secure consistently good or outstanding progress over time.
- The excellent range of visits and visitors for all year groups makes a significant contribution to the pupils' historical understanding, interest and engagement. Each new theme is launched with a 'memorable history experience' to capture pupils' imagination. It is achieved through a variety of different experiences such as visits, visitors, use of artefacts, drama and the transformation of the classroom into the setting that is going to be explored. Pupils and teachers said how much they valued these opportunities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is outstanding.

- The subject is extremely well organised and the curriculum team has a strong commitment to the importance of history in the primary curriculum. Teachers receive excellent support from the headteacher, and benefit from collaborative planning and regular formal and informal feedback. An overriding emphasis is placed on ensuring that pupils only receive the very best learning opportunities.
- Excellent curriculum planning is matched by the development of very high-quality resources and ideas. As a result, history makes a significant contribution to improving pupils' skills in other curriculum areas, for example in literacy, developing mathematical skills and in using new technologies.
- Pupils' progress in history is formally assessed and recorded. Teachers make excellent use of national curriculum guidance and internal moderation to support this aspect of their work.
- Effective self-evaluation ensures an excellent understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development. For example the school is aware that the coverage and development of skills and understanding of interpretation in history is underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- sharpening systems of assessment and mapping of skills so that leaders and managers have a clearer understanding of how well pupils are acquiring increasingly complex historical skills, particularly interpretation, as they move through the school.

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