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Mrs Collis
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Dear Mrs Collis

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Tuesday 12 December 2006 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good with some excellent features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in history overall are good.

- Attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average, and in history all groups of pupils make good progress. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent in history. Pupils value their history lessons highly. They are keen and enthusiastic to learn and behaviour in lessons is excellent.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning in history is good with some excellent elements.

- Teachers form excellent relationships with pupils and adopt a wide range of active strategies to engage and motivate pupils to achieve their best. Pupils are encouraged to work productively both independently and in groups though some opportunities are missed to enable pupils to evaluate their own work. The quality of class discussions and interactions between teachers and pupils is excellent.
- Assessment procedures are sound, are increasingly being used to inform teaching, and are supported very well by materials from the local authority inspection and advisory service. The subject leader rightly identifies the need to ensure that the subject's new assessment framework is used by all teachers.
- Support and guidance in history is effective, especially where targeted pupils are given additional opportunities to discuss their interests and concerns with teachers.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The subject leader has worked hard to provide a history curriculum which meets the needs of pupils.
- Particular strengths of the curriculum include a focus on creative and imaginative links with other subjects; for example, drama, dance, music and art.
- Assemblies often have a history theme which pupils enjoy organising and contributing to.
- Pupils emphasise how much they enjoy history lessons and the range of topics studied. The subject leader correctly identifies that there needs to be more local history.
- The subject benefits from an excellent enrichment programme with many visits and an interesting range of speakers and living history experiences.

Leadership and management of history

Leadership and management in history are good with some excellent elements.

- The subject leader and her colleagues have worked extremely hard and enthusiastically to ensure that history is well taught in the school and that teachers are well prepared. The leading history teachers are

well qualified and use their knowledge and experience effectively to make improvements.

- Subject self-evaluation is sound although it does not yet demonstrate clearly enough how the various developments make an impact on pupils' standards and achievement. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.
- The subject leader uses well the support and advice of the history team of the local inspection and advisory service.

Subject issue: history and literacy

The subject leader has placed great emphasis on developing all aspects of literacy, not just writing. This focus has contributed strongly to establishing good links across the curriculum so that all aspects of literacy are developed well in history.

Inclusion

All groups of pupils make good progress in history as a consequence of the good teaching and provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- strengthen the subject self-review process
- use the subject assessment framework consistently across the school so that teachers track pupils' progress more accurately and use the resulting information to match lesson activities to individual needs
- develop a local history unit.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority, the Diocese and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector