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Dear Mr Dickinson

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme - History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during the visit I made on 23 March 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.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in my feedback at the end of the visit, to support development in history. This follows. 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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards

Standards in history are below average and pupils make unsatisfactory progress in their acquisition of historical skills in Key Stages 1 and 2.

- Children in the Reception year make good progress and many are beginning to use historical terminology accurately. Some are also able to make intelligent guesses as to the use of a range of historical artefacts.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils have a basic knowledge of the periods they are studying. However, their subject skills are underdeveloped as

is their conceptual understanding. Older pupils, in particular, have insufficient understanding of bias and are not sufficiently aware of how historians make their judgements.

- Generally, pupils' writing is of below average quality. However, when challenged appropriately and given opportunities to produce extended writing, some pupils complete impressive assignments, for example on the experiences of evacuees.
- Pupils' personal development in history is satisfactory. They enjoy the subject and behave well in lessons. However, their willingness to make oral contributions in class is variable and their speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning overall inadequate but two good lessons were seen during the visit.

- Classroom management is good overall and pupils are generally fully engaged by the subject-matter.
- Good use is made of artefacts in the Reception class where children are encouraged to ask questions of the data.
- However, in other years, teachers' expectations and the challenge offered to pupils are not high enough to enable pupils to develop conceptual understanding and acquire historical skills effectively. As a result, pupils (and especially the more able) do not produce the quality of work of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always provide activities to meet the needs of different abilities. Pupils of different abilities complete the same tasks and challenge suffers.
- The quality of marking is variable and pupils do not always receive sufficient advice on how they can improve their work. Assessment is unsatisfactory, varies from class to class, and does not lead to effective lesson planning and teaching.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory although a reasonable range of enrichment activities are provided.

- There is insufficient emphasis on the development of historical skills and curriculum planning documentation contains little information on progression in the subject.
- Although there are regular focused days with history as the starting point – the Ancient Greek day for example, there are few examples of joint planning with other subject areas to provide a coherent experience for pupils.
- There is a good range of historical trips and pupils speak highly of their visits to the Yorvik Centre, Oakwell Hall and Eden Camp.

Leadership and management of history

Leadership and management of history are inadequate.

- There has been no subject co-ordinator for some time and planning and direction for the subject have suffered as a result.
- Curriculum planning is unsatisfactory. The policy for the development of history is not detailed enough and includes little information on skills acquisition, conceptual understanding and progression in the subject.
- No teachers have qualifications in history and there is little support for their professional development.
- There is no effective monitoring and evaluation of subject performance.

Inclusion

Pupils with learning difficulties are supported and all can access the curriculum. However, as previously indicated, planning, teaching and assessment are not good enough to give all pupils the requisite opportunities to reach their potential in history. More able pupils in particular are not achieving as well as they can because they are insufficiently challenged.

Literacy

Pupils skills in literacy are not fostered sufficiently in history lessons.

- Pupils' use of historical terminology is limited and there are not enough opportunities for them to discuss extensively with their classmates. Their speaking and listening skills are therefore underdeveloped.
- As previously indicated, when given opportunities for extended writing, some pupils produce impressive work, However, there are insufficient formal links to their work in literacy in school generally.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the appointment of a subject leader to take responsibility for raising standards and achievement in history by providing more direction for development in the subject, including planning for progression, regular monitoring of subject performance and support for non-specialist teachers of history
- better teaching which challenges pupils at levels appropriate to their different abilities
- a greater focus on pupils' historical understanding and acquisition of historical skills
- assessment and marking which lead to more effective curriculum planning and which offer pupils more advice on how they can improve their work.

Thank you once again for your kindness during my visit. I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

Yours sincerely

Jim Kidd
Additional Inspector