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Mrs J Murray
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Dear Mrs Murray

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Thursday 24 May 2007 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in history overall are good.

- Attainment on entry to the school is about average and pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress with effective targeted support. More able pupils achieve well but could be challenged to do even better.

- Pupils' personal development is good in history. They can argue well about what they think is right and wrong about historical events and personalities. Pupils value their history lessons highly. They are keen and enthusiastic to learn and behaviour in lessons is excellent.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in history is good.

- Teachers form good relationships with pupils and adopt a suitable range of strategies to engage and motivate pupils. Pupils are encouraged to work productively both independently and in groups. As a consequence, the quality of class discussions and the interactions between teachers and pupils is good.
- A new assessment profile for history is being developed and the school rightly identifies the need to be more consistent in judging levels. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged appropriately but more could be done to ensure that their personal interests are used in class. Target setting and marking, though developing well, do not yet identify clearly enough how individual pupils can make improvements and attain higher levels.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school is beginning to build creatively on the QCA framework by introducing new topics of study.
- A particular strength of the curriculum is the focus on using ICT and PowerPoint to elaborate on history topics. Pupils liked being engaged in lessons. They liked having to decide if they should remain in Eyam or flee the plague.
- Pupils have good opportunities to handle and ask questions about a good range of artefacts kept by the school.
- The school correctly identifies that it needs to improve still further opportunities for boys to write more and to cover the full range of history concepts more regularly.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in history are good.

- The new subject leader has made a good start in bringing clear direction for the subject in the school and developing good plans for further development. You have given her good support. This is beginning to impact positively on key aspects of planning, especially in relation to assessment.

- Subject self-evaluation is good. The school accurately identifies and demonstrates its many strengths and areas for development.

Subject issue: provision for the gifted and talented

- The school's provision for gifted and talented history pupils is good. There is a range of extra-curricular activities for these pupils to engage in and they said that they valued the talks given by visitors. Some said they would like more opportunities to explore further their own history interests in class.

Inclusion

All groups of students make good progress in history as a consequence of the good quality of support and guidance and effective provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- continuing to develop the history assessment profile in order to ensure that all teachers develop a better understanding of assessing levels in history and hence improve target setting
- improving marking so that pupils know more clearly what they need to do to address their weaknesses
- exploring ways of enabling more able pupils to build on their own history interests in class.

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 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