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Mr W Kirtley
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Dear Mr Kirtley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 May 2007 to look at work in history.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on history and literacy.

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 four part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards in history are broadly average.

- Pupils have sound knowledge of the topics they have studied and are particularly well informed about aspects of the history of their community.
- Pupils' historical skills are less well developed. They use a range of sources of evidence and older pupils undertake research using the

internet. Their use of sources is generally confined to observation or acquiring information, rather than more discriminatory use.

- Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy history, especially the visits and visitors they experience, and they behave well. They collaborate well with others.

Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features.

- Pupils gain increasing knowledge about the past because they are eager to learn and because teachers themselves enjoy history and provide a range of interesting activities.
- Lessons have a clear focus, often drawn from the DfES/QCA Scheme of Work; however, there is an over-reliance on these resources.
- Very good use is made of local history expertise to engage pupils and make the subject more relevant as well as enjoyable.
- Teachers do not always set work which meets the needs of all pupils. This is partly because they have had very little subject training to develop their expertise in history and complement their enthusiasm.
- Assessment in history is under-developed. Often work is marked solely for literacy rather than for its historical content.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The topics of the National Curriculum programme of study are covered. There is some overlap and discontinuity which results from mixed age classes, with some split year groups. This is scheduled to be tackled as part of the planning for the new class structure for September 2007.
- There is no clear planning for the development of pupils' historical skills, such as enquiry, or their understanding of concepts such as change and continuity.
- There is a strong emphasis on local history which develops pupils' knowledge of their own heritage.
- The school makes good use of visits to a range of museums and sites, and of visitors to the school to enrich pupils' study of history.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- There is currently no subject leader, but your oversight and the collaborative efforts of staff ensure that subject management is satisfactory.

- The school's recent self-evaluation of the subject is comprehensive, accurate and provides a good basis for further development. The subject improvement plan has appropriate priorities.
- There is only limited monitoring of history work, including recent moderation of pupils' work.

Subject issue: literacy in history

Teachers are increasingly using opportunities to bring together pupils' studies in literacy and history, mainly through a range of writing tasks. However, there is not yet a whole school approach. As noted above, pupils' written work is assessed mainly for literacy and opportunities to assess for history as well are missed.

Inclusion

The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is comparable with their peers. Pupils with LDD benefit from focussed support by teaching assistants which promotes their achievement. However, the work provided for more able pupils is not always sufficiently challenging.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the revised curriculum planning identifies how pupils' historical skills and understanding will be developed, as well as their knowledge
- improving the quality of assessment
- increasing the challenge for more able pupils.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Heather Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector