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Miss Pitchforth
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Pitchforth

Ofsted survey inspection programme: History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 October 2007 to inspect 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and a review of a sample of pupils' work.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Standards in history are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

- Pupils show sound knowledge of the topics they are studying. Older and more able pupils often show detailed knowledge and talk fluently about what they have learnt. Pupils' grasp of historical skills is less secure than their subject knowledge. This partly reflects the uneven progress they have made throughout the school.
- The standard of pupils' work in history benefits from links which teachers make with literacy, including opportunities to promote speaking and listening.

- Pupils' personal development in history is good. They enjoy history and are eager learners. Their behaviour is usually very good, but dips when the work is insufficiently challenging or engaging. Pupils generally show good social skills when working with others. Older pupils in particular show good understanding of moral issues, as seen in their work on the abolition of the slave trade.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching is variable and hence, although pupils' learning is satisfactory, the progress they make throughout the school is not as good as it could be. Pupils learn best when lessons engage their interest and have appropriate levels of challenge.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about history and this in turn helps to promote pupils' enthusiasm. However they have had limited professional development opportunities to extend their subject knowledge and expertise. This affects the confidence with which they teach aspects of the subject.
- Teachers make systematic use of approaches to teaching and learning promoted by the National Primary Strategy, including sharing learning objectives with pupils.
- Teachers provide varied activities for pupils. The best provide opportunities for pupils to explore historical evidence, sometimes as part of an extended project, and consolidate their literacy skills. However, work is often insufficiently adjusted to meet the needs and abilities of different pupils and there is some inappropriate use of commercially produced worksheets.
- Marking is too variable. The best identifies the strengths in pupils' work and how they might improve, but some is cursory or focuses mainly on correcting spellings.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school's recent revision of its long-term planning has ensured that the statutory requirements for the topics to be studied are now met.
- The revised curriculum plan incorporates topics which have been chosen for their particular relevance to pupils, including a local study linked to John Wesley and a study linked to the abolition of the slave trade.
- The school has recognised that it needs to ensure greater coherence in its curriculum plans, especially to ensure the development of pupils' historical skills.
- Links are made with literacy, numeracy and ICT, but these are currently at the initiative of individual teachers. The school has

identified that a structured overview would be beneficial to pupils' learning.

- The school provides a wide range of opportunities for visits and visitors to enrich its provision for history which pupils enjoy. The school is currently reviewing these opportunities to ensure that they provide the maximum benefit to pupils.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- Recent changes to the leadership of both the school and the subject have resulted in an audit of the school's provision for history and the identification of appropriate priorities.
- The school has acknowledged that it does not have any systems in place for monitoring its provision in history or for tracking pupils' progress. The priorities it has identified, including the whole school focus on developing the role of subject leaders, have the potential to tackle these weaknesses.
- The headteacher and subject leader have, within a short space of time, acquired a good range of resources and contacts to improve provision.

Subject issue: literacy in history

As already noted, teachers are taking opportunities to plan lessons to promote both pupils' literacy skills and their achievement in history. These include some good examples of the use of speaking and listening skills, such as preparing questions for and responding to a talk by visiting speakers. The school has recognised the scope for making these links more structured to support pupils' learning.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

There is no marked difference in the achievement of boys and girls. The expertise and time of teaching assistants are well-used to support pupils' individual needs, especially the youngest and those who find learning difficult. The needs of more able pupils are not always well met. They flourish when presented with appropriate challenge or opportunities for independent work, but some activities are insufficiently demanding and limit their progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing guidance in progression of historical skills and understanding to support teachers' planning
- acting on the priorities identified by the school, including developing the monitoring role of the subject leader

- developing more systematic links between history and literacy.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Heather Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector