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Mr N Fiddaman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fiddaman

Ofsted survey inspection programme - History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 November 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, visits to three lessons; scrutiny of relevant documentation, and a review of a sample of pupils' work.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Standards attained by pupils are generally average although some pupils do better than this. Because pupils' ability when they start school is generally well below average, this represents good and, in some cases, outstanding progress. More able pupils are very good at recalling the substance of what they have studied. However, these pupils are not encouraged enough to see broader implications and links with other topics and periods.
- Pupils' personal development is good. In the lessons inspected, they were developing sensitivity to other people and to objects of worth and beauty. They work well together, often supporting one another to

resolve issues. They were developing an awareness of other cultures in the past.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers are knowledgeable and confident when teaching history topics. They enjoy the subject and this enthusiasm is communicated positively to pupils.
- Planning is clear and effective and teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses.
- There is a useful, pragmatic assessment system which helps teachers keep track of pupils' progress. However, it is not currently used to provide a general overview of the performance of pupils in history. It helps with defining progression in both content and skills but, nevertheless, progression is not sufficiently clear. This has an impact on what is taught.
- Work is regularly marked but some written comments are better than others at helping pupils to improve.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and they are eager to learn. They work well in lessons, individually and in groups. Behaviour is excellent.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Until recently, the curriculum has largely followed individual Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work. This year, the school has begun innovating by the inclusion of a unit on local history.
- Uncertainty in the school about how to link and extend the QCA schemes has hindered development. However, there is clear interest among staff in further innovation. If staff do this, they will be able to address the current limited coherence between history units. They will also be able to address, better, the knowledge and skills required by pupils.
- There is a good number of visits to historical sites; for example, Rochester Castle, which pupils enjoy and bring an immediacy to their studies.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The current coordinator has a very good idea of the quality of history in the school. She monitors the subject carefully and ensures that staff

have the help and resources needed to teach the current history curriculum well.

- The coordinator is aware of the issues in school history outlined above and she has pragmatic plans to address these.

The subject's response to Every Child Matters

The school is well aware of Every Child Matters but has focused more on broader welfare issues and not on the implications for individual subjects such as history. During the inspection, I was pleased to be able to discuss wider implications and the impact this may have on considering the needs of pupils when revising the history curriculum.

Inclusion

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and teaching assistants are deployed effectively. Comment has already been made on the needs of the more able.

Linked to the key issue for improvement in the last whole-school inspection report, the current curriculum does little to help pupils know and understand more about the history and culture of the different people of the United Kingdom.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- defining progression in content and skills more clearly
- improving provision for more able pupils
- re-interpreting the National Curriculum so that the school curriculum addresses, more explicitly, the needs of pupils. This should include the point for improvement in the last whole-school inspection concerning the improvement of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the history of the different peoples of the United Kingdom.

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

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

Paul Armitage HMI
Ofsted Specialist Adviser for History