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Mr Peter Johnson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Johnson

Ofsted survey inspection programme: History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 01 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

Overall, standards are average and pupils make satisfactory progress.

- Some pupils do better than this; for example, older pupils in the group I interviewed were able to talk with fluency about World War II and Tudor portraiture. Some of the pupils' written work I sampled showed good use of evidence, the ability to make reasoned judgements and the ability to communicate well in writing.
- These observations raise the question of how more able pupils could be challenged further. There is currently no systematic procedure for identifying such pupils and addressing their needs.

- Pupils' personal development is good. They speak confidently and are comfortable in history lessons. They are happy to speculate, particularly when interpreting evidence. They hold moral standpoints; for example on the changing role of women and the treatment of children in Victorian Britain.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teachers enjoy teaching history and are keen to share this enthusiasm with pupils. Lessons and other activities are interesting and pupils learn. In discussions, pupils can recall what they have studied and they speak particularly warmly of visits that have been organised to places of historic interest. They also like being 'real historians' – something that is actively promoted by teachers.
- However lesson and other planning now needs to be more consistent between teachers; staff need to have a better understanding of progression in the subject; and there needs to be a system for regular assessment of pupils' work so that it can be used to inform future teaching and learning.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school is currently following a curriculum which closely follows QCA schemes of work. As part of a wide-ranging review since you became headteacher, you and the coordinator have correctly identified aspects of the curriculum that are already done well and aspects that can be improved. Your thorough but realistic plans include improving coherence between topics, links between history and literacy and a greater focus on skills development. We had a good discussion around the ideas in Ofsted's recent history report. I commented that while your planned improvement in skills development is appropriate for pupils, the uniqueness of history lies largely in its knowledge content which pupils also need to understand.

### Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- You agreed with me that 'satisfactory' is a fair judgement given that there are pending changes to the subject that are largely at the planning stage and have yet to impact and raise standards. However, having said that, we also agreed that you have an effective, new

coordinator for the subject who recognises the need for improvement, has plans for ensuring this and has already put some improvements in place. The plans include changes to the curriculum, the improvement of planning including the proper recognition of progression, greater recognition of the needs of the more able, and the introduction of assessment. In addition, the coordinator recognises the need to introduce formal monitoring of teaching to ensure quality.

### The subject's response to Every Child Matters

While the school has taken Every Child Matters very seriously in many aspects of its work, it has yet to think through implications for subjects including history. I referred earlier to our discussions about Ofsted's recent history report and its recommendations that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills need to be at the heart of the history curriculum and that there is scope for the curriculum to become more relevant by helping pupils understand the historical background to the present. You and your coordinator responded positively to these ideas and said that you would consider them carefully in your current curriculum review.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- There is no apparent difference in performance of girls and boys.
- The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities were very well served in the classes I observed. However, more could be done to challenge and encourage the more able.
- In history, not enough is done to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural Britain and Europe.

In addition to pursuing your curriculum review which is already in hand, areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving teachers' understanding of progression and its delivery
- introducing a formal assessment system
- introducing monitoring
- improving provision 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. 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