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Mrs M Mann  
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Dear Mrs Mann

Ofsted survey inspection programme: History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 January 2008 to inspect 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's response to the Every Child Matters agenda.

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: visits to classes, interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and a review of a sample of pupils' work.

The overall quality of history was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Overall standards in history are average but there is variation in what is attained by different pupils. Given their below average starting points and the diversity in the school, their progress is outstanding.

- Some pupils achieve very high standards, for example, the work of some Year 5 pupils on Ancient Greek vases and Year 6 pupils using various media. In lessons, pupils' responses to questions were perceptive and of a high standard.

- The progress made by pupils is outstanding. This is clear from the regular, accurate assessments made by staff and from the inspection of pupils' written work showing clear progression. The well-planned course and detailed lesson planning linked to pupils' needs ensures that pupils progress at a good rate with suitable challenge.
- Pupils' personal development is very good. Innovations such as philosophy (linked to history) lessons help develop pupils' confidence as well moral values. Socially, children work constructively in groups. Pupils' cultural development in history is very good, supported by initiatives in International History Week and regular comparison between history that is being studied and parallel histories elsewhere in the world.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- A key feature of the learning is the attitude of the pupils. There is an excellent work ethos. Children listen and they want to learn. Many pupils have real enthusiasm and are eager to share what they have learnt. Pupils work independently and research and evaluate well.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about history and have good levels of knowledge and understanding about the topics covered. Lessons are very well planned and they meet pupils' needs. Teachers involve pupils and there are lots of opportunities for pupils to ask questions and research things for themselves. A particular strength is the posing of open questions to pupils and their subsequent thoughtful answers. Another is the identification and subsequent support of gifted and talented pupils.
- Marking of pupils' work is regular and thorough although there is variation in the quality of comments in that some provide clearer points for improvement than others. The arrangements for setting step-by-step developmental targets for pupils, linked to your already very well developed objectives, are not yet sufficiently explicit to provide pupils with a clear means of understanding their progression.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is very good.

- While it retains some features, developments are taking place to ensure that the curriculum is more relevant to pupils. Good examples of this include links with other subjects – for example with literacy and geography in the study of the Victorians in Year 5; and the inclusion of more drama, information and communication technology (ICT) and use of different forms of media in lessons.
- There is very good use of museums, heritage sites and other outside facilities.

## Leadership and management

The quality of management is outstanding.

- The coordinator, well supported by senior management is reflective, evaluates well and has a very clear understanding of the subject and the quality of teaching and learning in history.
- He is innovative, most clearly seen in the way he is successfully encouraging colleagues to develop the curriculum and his roles in the development of provision for the gifted and talented and in ensuring challenge through effective planning.

## Subject issue: Every Child Matters

The Every Child Matters agenda as applied to history is an important part of the coordinator's strategy to make the curriculum, teaching and learning more relevant to pupils' needs. A good example of this, linked to different topics studied, is the way in which the school uses parents from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to support different aspects of the curriculum. The coordinator has identified that the application of Every Child Matters needs to go further – for example, by the use of more local history and the use of 'big questions' but a very good start has already been made.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in history is excellent. Pupils from all backgrounds work very well together. A noteworthy feature is the way children listen to and support one another. Pupils of all abilities are well served with work adjusted to suit different needs. Teaching assistants in the classes observed are well deployed; for example in supporting recent arrivals from Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included the need to ensure that:

- maintaining the on-going development of the curriculum to improve its relevance
- improving the consistency of marking and the use of targets.

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  
Additional Inspector