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Mrs E L Charles
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Charles

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 February 2008 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 information and communication technology (ICT).

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 the observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils are soundly developing their knowledge and understanding of various historical topics. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have a basic understanding of the Great Fire of London, while those in Key Stage 2 are developing a better understanding of, for example, Henry VIII and his six wives, toys and games in Tudor times and the invasion of parts of England by the Vikings.
- Pupils can competently use different historical sources. However, their skills in interpreting them are limited because they do not have access

to a wide enough range of such sources. Pupils do not always write extensively.

- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are excellent. They settle down quickly to the tasks set and some are keen to ask and answer questions in whole-class discussions. They work productively in small groups and when working with the adults.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with good features.

- Lessons are conscientiously planned. Learning objectives and outcomes are identified and these are routinely shared with the pupils.
- The challenge for the pupils is satisfactory and this gets better when they are researching topics for themselves. Some are interested in the subject and they enjoy undertaking research work.
- The good features of teaching include the creation of a good learning environment by the staff. They do this through their good skills in organising and managing various learning activities.
- However, the needs of some pupils are not always identified in the planning and teaching. A scrutiny of pupils' written work, for example, does not show how the more able, including the gifted and talented, are challenged.
- Marking is regularly undertaken by the staff. However, comments for pupils tend to be brief and they do not always indicate to pupils how to improve their work. Short-term targets for improvement are not routinely identified.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has recently undertaken a significant review of its whole-school curriculum. There is now a greater emphasis on the role of the 'creative' curriculum and a desire to offer stimulating learning experiences for all pupils.
- The history curriculum is planned over a two-year cycle and it is supported by study units produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). This planning cycle is sound as long as there is no repetition in the content being covered for the different year groups.
- Pupils' experiences are enriched by visits to places of historical interest, for example Chatsworth House and RAF Cosford. A visit to the British Museum is planned for July 2008. This aspect of provision is still relatively limited.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The history coordinator assumed responsibility for history in September 2007. She also has responsibilities for two other subjects in this small school.
- The coordinator's role is developing. She has developed a sound understanding of history within the school in a short time and she has taken a lead role in developing long-term curriculum planning. It is anticipated that her role in monitoring and evaluating the subject will be strengthened in the near future.

Subject issue: ICT

The use of ICT is satisfactory with good features.

- Teachers use the interactive whiteboard confidently and competently.
- Pupils of all ages thoroughly enjoy working on the computers. They are developing their ICT skills well. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, can confidently use search engines to find suitable sites for research.
- Participation rates in extracurricular activities are good. The school runs two ICT clubs and it is reported that both of these are well attended.
- The school is planning to enhance ICT provision this academic year by investing a further £8000 to buy more hardware and software.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- Teachers know the needs of individual pupils well. The work planned for different groups of pupils is generally appropriate.
- Lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress, especially when they are offered additional support by the adults. However, the needs of the more able, including the gifted and talented, are not always properly met.

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

- pupils undertake a wider range of extended writing in history so that their literacy skills are improved
- pupils' skills in history are better developed through the use of a broader range of sources
- marking shows pupils how to improve their work
- the needs of higher attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, are better met.

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

Champak Chauhan
Her Majesty's Inspector