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Miss S James  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss James

### Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Wednesday 04 June 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 provision for gifted and talented pupils.

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 yourself, the coordinator for history and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Attainment on entry is average and pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing their historical understanding and skills, such as researching information about evacuees and planning how to communicate this to the rest of the class.
- Pupils' personal development is good in history. Pupils say they think history is 'really interesting' and they like learning about the Second World War and having debates on 'important issues' such as how well people lived in the past. They behave very well in lessons and they discuss topics well in small groups. They communicate their ideas

clearly and enthusiastically although more opportunities should be provided for pupils to develop their extended writing skills.

- Pupils talk knowledgeably about the topics they have studied although sometimes their recall of details about these is vague. They especially like 'active' lessons when they can handle real artefacts and ask questions about them.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers develop good relationships with pupils. Lessons are planned with great care to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are taken into account and that all pupils can engage in stimulating activities. Class group work is lively and productive and pupils' feedback to the whole class is communicated succinctly and cogently.
- Lesson planning is detailed and teachers know the needs of individual pupils well. The level of challenge is usually high.
- Assessment procedures are effective and enable teachers to support and guide pupils well. Teachers constantly communicate to pupils what they expect from different groups and praise those who meet their objectives well. They do not as yet fully share with individual pupils exactly how well they are doing in terms of National Curriculum levels or expectations, but the co-ordinator intends to do this next year.
- Teaching assistants are used extremely well to support pupils with learning difficulties and to help them make progress.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are helpful written comments in most of their books.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and has been reviewed regularly.
- There is a good emphasis on the key elements of history and pupils are introduced effectively to key historical concepts, such as change over time. The coordinator also has established good links with other subjects so that opportunities for including aspects of history throughout the curriculum are maximised.
- There is good enrichment in the form of numerous visits to places of historical interest. The pupils were planning a visit to Hanbury Hall to re-enact life of evacuee children. Local farmers often allow pupils to discover how farm machines have changed over time. Trips to the museum are valued highly.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are excellent.

- The subject co-ordinator has a degree in history and she has used her knowledge and experience well to ensure that planning and lesson activities are consistently of a high standard across the school. This is

especially so given the other important responsibilities she has within the school and that she teaches most of the lessons herself.

- History is reviewed thoroughly and rigorously each year. The coordinator has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and her priorities for development are clearly appropriate for improving provision further.

Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented pupils

- Provision is good. However, the co-ordinator is aware that further work has to be undertaken to ensure that able history pupils are supported better through sharing best practice with other schools that have developed this aspect of their work more successfully and over a longer period of time. She is planning visits to local secondary schools to gain a better grasp of what highly able history pupils can achieve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- sharing with pupils the assessment details that are already known about them and which would help them to focus more tightly on what to do to reach higher levels
- increasing the opportunities for all pupils to develop their extended writing skills
- improving further the provision and support for gifted and talented history 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 and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm  
Her Majesty's Inspector