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Mrs A Ray
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ray

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 May 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) in history and on provision for gifted and talented history students.

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 you, pupils and the governor with responsibility for history, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an 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 make sound progress over time and achieve standards that are appropriate for their ages.
- Pupils in Year 1, for example, know how houses changed over time, while those in Year 2 can compare toys from the Second World War and the 1950s with toys from today.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are enhancing their knowledge and understanding about invaders and settlers. In Year 3, pupils know about Boudicca and the Romans, and where the Vikings originated

from. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 know some Greek myths and legends, and can compare aspects of contemporary life to Victorian times. Some even have a good appreciation of social class in the Victorian period.

- Pupils undertake research work and some are aware of different sources of evidence. However, their wider historical skills, including their chronological understanding, are not more broadly developed.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they enjoy learning the subject. Many are keen to research topics in their own time. Pupils participate well in whole class discussions and work well with each other.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Pupils make sound progress over time. There is an appropriate coverage of content and activities are suitably planned.
- In discussions, pupils said they enjoyed their learning and felt that they made at least satisfactory progress.
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and they enable the pupils they are working with to make much more rapid progress.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked. The comments, however, tend to be brief and they do not always indicate to pupils how to improve their work. Targets are not routinely identified for pupils to enhance their progress.
- The needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met well by the teaching assistants. They have good knowledge and understanding of the needs of such pupils and work intensively with them.
- Pupils who are travellers are integrated extremely well into lessons and in school generally.
- As a result, pupils from vulnerable groups make at least satisfactory progress.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school has recently reviewed its curriculum and has drawn up a draft two-year planning cycle to meet the needs of the mixed-age classes.
- The curriculum is broad and meets requirements. However, the school needs to ensure that the current plan is not imbalanced; two classes, for example, have long periods when the subject is not taught.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits to places of historical interest and by the use of visitors. Pupils regularly visit local museums and staff from the museums come to talk to them in school. The school and its records which date back to the mid-Victorian period are also used for work in local history. Pupils say how much they enjoy such activities.

Leadership and management of history

The leadership and management of history are satisfactory.

- You are currently leading the subject on an interim basis and you do this well. You have an appropriate insight into the strengths of the subject and the areas that need further development.
- The school has a governor with oversight of history. Together you work well to ensure that provision in the subject continues to improve.
- Leadership roles for subjects are being reviewed for the forthcoming academic year because the management structure will be changing for September 2008.

Subject issue: ICT

- The provision and use of ICT are satisfactory.
- Pupils are competent users of ICT. They can access relevant websites for historical topics and they say they are familiar with using CD-ROMs and other audio-visual aids.

Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented pupils in history

- The school is in the process of strengthening this aspect of its work. It is working in close partnership with other schools to develop teaching and learning approaches to meet the needs of such pupils. As yet, no pupils have been identified as gifted or talented in history.

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

- develop pupils' historical skills more widely, including their chronological understanding
- ensure that marking and assessment procedures inform pupils how to improve their work and that they are routinely set targets for improvement.

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