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Mr M Kitchen
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kitchen

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 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 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 staff and pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages and they are developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. They have good attitudes and can talk animatedly and informatively about their work.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1, for example, know about how homes have changed over time and can describe and explain key differences between life in Victorian times and today. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have an accurate and in-depth knowledge of life in Ancient Greece and they know about the impact of rationing, evacuation and the Blitz upon civilians in Britain during the Second World War.

- Pupils enjoy history and describe it as 'fun'. They particularly enjoy undertaking research and their enquiry skills are being well developed through structured activities which help to strengthen their learning and their historical understanding. Pupils regularly use different types of evidence, including artefacts, but their skills in historical interpretation are underdeveloped.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They are involved in their lessons, eager to learn and keen to answer questions. Relationships are good and pupils cooperate well when working in groups. Behaviour is good.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teachers plan lessons well, use a wide range of resources and employ a variety of activities to help pupils make progress. Learning objectives are routinely shared with classes but the opportunity is not always taken towards the end of lessons to review thoroughly what has been learned.
- Stimulating displays in classrooms support the learning well. These reflect the variety of activities and tasks set and the engagement of the pupils in their work.
- The needs of those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are regularly considered. They are well supported so that they can be fully involved in their learning. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and they enable the pupils they are working with to make as much progress as the others. However, the needs of those who are gifted history pupils are not fully considered.
- Pupils' work in history is regularly marked, comments are helpful and teachers give much praise. However, the comments made do not always indicate to pupils how to improve their work.
- The school has recently started to undertake the formal assessment of progress in history according to National Curriculum levels. This work is in its early stages.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets requirements. The school has recently made some changes to the topics studied in Years 3 and 4 and is considering how, for example, more local history can be incorporated into its programmes of study.
- Cross curricular links are strong and help to strengthen pupils' learning. Literacy, for example, is developed effectively in history in all year groups, and opportunities are taken to link with art when studying 'Remembrance' and with design and technology when looking at how life changed for people in Britain during the Second World War.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits to places of historical interest and by the use of visitors. Pupils say how much they

enjoy these activities and how they make their learning more interesting. Close links are being developed with Kirkleatham Museum and there are annual visits to Segedunum and to Eden Camp.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are satisfactory.

- The part-time coordinator is enthusiastic about her role and is keen to develop the subject across all year groups. She is well organised and works hard to see that staff are well supported.
- Planning is thorough and action plans have appropriate priorities. The work of the coordinator in monitoring teachers' planning and checking on work in pupils' books is beginning to provide the school with an overview of teaching and learning in history but this work is at an early stage.
- Record keeping is detailed and the digital photographs of historical activities help to provide the school with an accurate and fascinating record of pupils' learning. The coordinator recognises the value of learning outside the classroom and works hard to ensure that the visits by pupils to places of historical interest and the use of theatre groups who visit school are integrated fully into the pupils' learning.
- Self evaluation is generally accurate and the school is developing a clear picture of the strengths of the subject and the areas that need further development. The school is aware that gifted history pupils require greater challenge and that assessment is underdeveloped.

Subject issue: ICT

The use of ICT in history is good.

- Teachers use interactive whiteboards regularly and competently. Pupils enjoy it when they are used because, as they pointed out, this technology helps to bring variety to their learning.
- Pupils are developing their ICT skills well. They often use computers in lessons and regularly have the opportunity to produce work on the computer. Older pupils can access and confidently interrogate relevant websites, for instance in relation to the home front in Britain during the Second World War.

Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented history students

The provision for gifted history students is satisfactory.

- Teachers adjust the curriculum and plan a range of activities to meet the needs of different groups of children. However, they do not indicate clearly what is expected of gifted history pupils. As a result, opportunities to challenge these pupils to attain even higher standards are missed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing assessment practice, particularly feedback to ensure that pupils are given precise advice on how they can improve their work
- developing pupils' historical skills more widely, especially those of interpretation
- improving provision for gifted 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

Michael Maddison
Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted's Specialist Adviser for History