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Mr J Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 October 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) 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, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding and standards are well above average.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy history. They are keen to learn and they communicate very confidently both to each other in class and to adults. Pupils in Year 6, for example, spoke most enthusiastically and accurately about the 'Blitz' during the Second World War and were looking forward to being evacuated on a visit planned to re-enact the evacuation.

- Historical skills and concepts are being developed extremely well, with pupils' understanding of how to argue in history and how to write carefully, and at length, about different points of view being very strong.
- Pupils are constantly encouraged to evaluate their own work and are expected to analyse and interpret a wide range of original sources and artefacts provided by the school.
- Pupils' personal development in history is outstanding. Pupils are fully engaged in their learning and are eager to find out more about the past through their topics. They are very well behaved, courteous and polite. They talk confidently about their work and ask pertinent and challenging questions about history.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Teachers are passionate about history and see the subject as an excellent vehicle for educating young people about the world in which they live and for developing key aspects of personal, social and cultural development.
- Lessons are very well planned and always have an imaginative focus to start pupils thinking in a lively and creative way about the key topic. Learning is generally well matched to individual needs, though more able history pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- Work is marked very carefully and comments by teachers are most helpful in enabling pupils to improve their work.
- Assessment practice is good, with levels of attainment being routinely used. However, assessment information is not used effectively by all teachers to help the more able pupils to attain even higher standards.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- The history curriculum is a real strength within the school. It more than meets the basic requirements. It is based on capturing pupils' imaginations through creative activities, stimulating stories and adventurous re-enactments, such as drama day when pupils become Vikings, or Knights debating around the huge wooden round table in the school grounds. Also in the grounds are two large stockades which are regularly used to enable pupils to learn about sieges, military tactics and settlement life at different times.
- Cross-curricular links are extremely strong throughout the history curriculum. Literacy is very well developed and boys in particular benefit hugely from the imaginative games they play as a precursor to writing and making presentations for class display. Other subjects, such as art and geography, are also used to develop different aspects of history where appropriate.
- Pupils have many opportunities to visit relevant places of historical interest and experts (some of them from local families) are regularly

invited to school to reinforce the living history approach adopted by the school.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are outstanding.

- The subject coordinator has a real passion for history and how it is taught in primary schools. You support her well, drawing on your own experience in the subject. You work extremely well together to ensure that pupils experience history as being lively, stimulating and fun.
- All teachers enjoy teaching history and regularly use the re-enacting skills of the headteacher to allow pupils to put key historical personalities on trial or to interrogate them about their life and times.
- The subject is very well organised and a wide range of resources are used most effectively in lessons.
- The coordinator has generated a rigorous review process which enables all teachers to evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of provision and how different teaching approaches can be shared.

Subject issue: information and communication technology (ICT)

The use of ICT in history is outstanding.

- Classrooms have digital projectors and whiteboards and a range of resources is used to enable pupils to interact very well with computers to research topics and create presentations.
- Pupils say they find the use of the equipment enables them to create extremely well designed presentations which are then used as wall displays to celebrate pupils' work.
- Pupils often annotate pictures on whiteboards with their own ideas and descriptions before they write up their accounts fully in their books. This helps to strengthen their learning.

Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented history pupils

- No pupil is at present registered as being gifted in history. The school is fully aware of those pupils who demonstrate strengths in the subject and provision is made for them in lessons. This provision is currently quite general and lacks the fine tuning required to ensure it appropriately meets the needs of the more able pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- enabling teachers to use assessment information more effectively to help the more able pupils to attain even higher standards.

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