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Mrs J Sandham  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Sandham

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 November 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 the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in history and also 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons and part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are average.

- Pupils enter the school with skills in communication, language and literacy which are below age-related expectations. They achieve well in history across the school and reach average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' chronological skills are fostered well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for example, they discuss families, in particular their parents and grandparents, and in Key Stage 1 they learn to place toys in order of their age.

- The use of 'Thinking Hats' and talk partners develops pupils' speaking and listening skills well and more able pupils confidently use historical terms and justify their views.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' skills of empathy are strong and more able pupils can see the value of history and enjoy, in their words, 'Putting ourselves in the shoes of others.'
- Pupils' knowledge of the topics they are studying, Ancient Egypt and Britain in the 1930s, for example, is good but their understanding of how historians work is limited. As a result, their skills in relation to the use of source material are underdeveloped.
- Pupils love history, behave exceptionally well and enjoy their lessons.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are examples of outstanding practice in Key Stage 2.

- Lesson preparation is good and teachers relate new topics to what has already been studied.
- Teachers use artefacts and pictures effectively to enable pupils to link the past with the present.
- Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. In the best lessons, for example, pupils are encouraged to explain their feelings and show empathy with people in the past.
- Teachers' questioning skills are good and, along with the effective team of teaching assistants, they ensure that challenge is appropriate, in order to meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- Assessment is good and teachers are fully aware of their pupils' progress in history. Teachers mark pupils' assignments in detail and offer them accurate advice on how they can improve their work. The use of video material for assessment in the EYFS, for example, is regarded as exemplary practice by the local authority.
- Teachers place emphasis on enhancing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying. However, they do not place enough emphasis on developing pupils' skills in using sources, in order for them to acquire a greater awareness of how historians make their judgements.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is planned well, with a significant emphasis on thematic studies, links with other subjects and on the development of pupils' key skills, in communication and literacy, for example.
- Resources produced by teachers are of good quality and are adapted to ensure that all pupils can make good progress in history.
- There is a good range of visitors and visits to foster pupils' learning outside the classroom and pupils enjoy practical activities, such as dressing in Tudor costume during their trip to the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds.

- The high-quality displays in classrooms and on corridors emphasise the school's cross-curricular approach to teaching history. Pupils are able to use the displays as a key resource for their learning.

### Leadership and management in history

The leadership and management of history are good.

- The humanities co-ordinator leads the subject-area by example and ensures that history has an important place in the life and work of the school.
- Formal, informal and joint lesson observations, regular scrutiny of exercise books, and discussions with pupils ensure that the co-ordinator has an accurate view of pupils' performance in history.
- Planning and lesson preparation are good and place appropriate emphasis on the raising of standards and achievement.
- Teachers spend considerable time sharing their practice in the teaching and learning of history. Leaders recognise, however, that there is insufficient professional development for non-specialist teachers of history to keep fully up-to-date with developments in the subject.

### Subject issue: ICT

The use of ICT in history is good and improving.

- Pupils in Year 2, for example, import pictures effectively in their work on St George, whilst those in Years 3 and 4 demonstrate good creativity in their film entitled, 'How to make an Egyptian mummy.'
- Pupils produce impressive PowerPoint presentations and those on Queen Victoria by Year 5 are of particularly good quality.
- Pupils use the Internet confidently for individual research, on popular names during Victorian times for example. They say they would like more opportunities to use computers in class.

### Subject issue: the provision for gifted and talented history pupils.

The provision for gifted history pupils is good.

- Although the school's gifted and talented register contains relatively few gifted history pupils, leaders are currently re-examining how these pupils may be identified more accurately.
- Teachers challenge gifted and more able pupils realistically in class, for example when Year 6 pupils are considering the impact of evacuation on children and young people during the Second World War.
- The cross-curricular coverage of history enables gifted history pupils to see the links between the history and other subjects, particularly literacy, and older pupils in particular are most articulate when expressing their views on the topics they are studying.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring pupils are more aware of how historians make their judgements as an introduction to developing their skills in using historical sources
- identifying more accurately gifted pupils of history in order that they are equitably represented on the school's gifted and talented register
- providing more subject-specific professional development for non-specialist teachers of history.

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

Jim Kidd  
Additional Inspector