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Mr J White
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Dear Mr White

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 December 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.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding and standards are average.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in history and acquire historical skills at a rapid rate. This is despite the fact that many pupils enter school with below average skills especially in communication, language and literacy.
- Pupils' knowledge of the topics they are studying is good. Moreover, their chronological skills are fostered very effectively in all years and, from as early as Year 2, pupils are encouraged to ask questions of the sources in front of them, in relation to Florence Nightingale for

example. In Year 3 and 4, they consider fact and opinion and are fully aware that some evidence is not to be trusted. By Year 5 and 6 they discuss the utility of evidence and use a range of sources to make reasoned arguments about, for example, the personality of Queen Victoria.

- Role play and 'hot-seating' help to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills very well. Their standards in writing are improving as a result of the many opportunities they have to rehearse their ideas before they put pen to paper.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent. Their behaviour is impeccable and they are invariably fully engaged in the subject-matter. They work outstandingly well in pairs and groups, and are delighted when their classmates succeed. They love history and see the value of studying it.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Teachers fascinate their pupils with the story of history but also demonstrate high expectations of what they can achieve by challenging them, at an early age, to interrogate the evidence and to work like historians.
- Resources prepared by staff are of the highest quality. Lesson preparation is comprehensive and ensures that pupils of all levels of ability are offered work which meets their individual needs. Teaching assistants are fully briefed and work very effectively with pupils who sometimes find the work difficult. As a result, these pupils make as much progress as all other pupils.
- Teachers and pupils treat each other with the utmost dignity and respect. Pupils are so engrossed by the lessons that they often do extra work at home.
- Assessment is good overall, but very good in upper Key Stage 2, where teachers mark assignments accurately. They send detailed information on pupils' performance in Year 6 to the local high schools. However, assessment practice lower down the school is inconsistent in quality and is sometimes not linked to skills' acquisition.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum comprises an ideal balance between pupils' enjoyment of the story of history and the emphasis on them acquiring progressively more complex historical skills.
- It also encourages pupils' creativity and helps them to see links with other subjects, with art and with design and technology for example, when they build models of Roman soldiers and Roman villages.
- The school provides a range of 'Additional History' activities, the 'Roman Day' and 'Egyptian Day' for example, when pupils dress in costume and sample food popular in the past.

- There is a wide variety of enrichment activities including history trips to Liverpool Museum and the Grosvenor Estate. Visitors come into school to share their experiences and to show pupils artefacts from the Second World War, for example.

Leadership and management in history

The leadership and management of history are outstanding.

- The history coordinator is passionate about her subject, leads by example and ensures that history maintains its important place on the school curriculum.
- Self-evaluation is excellent and is much more detailed than usually found. As a result of staff and pupil questionnaires, regular lesson observation and detailed scrutiny of pupils' work, the school has an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for development in the subject.
- Long and medium term planning and also lesson preparation are outstanding and place due emphasis on pupils' natural inquisitiveness about history and on the importance of acquiring historical skills to foster objectivity. Planning meets the needs of pupils of all levels of ability and, as a result, all achieve very well indeed in relation to both their academic and personal development.

Subject issue: ICT

The use of ICT in history is outstanding.

- The use of ICT is an integral part of most lessons and the electronic whiteboard is used very well by teachers both to introduce new topics and also to reinforce previous learning.
- Teachers use a wide range of websites for quizzes and interactive games in history. They also import pictures of artefacts into the whiteboard to enhance their lessons and to engage their pupils.
- Video clips are used extensively in each topic to bring the subject-matter alive to pupils.
- Pupils use the Internet for individual research and for reinforcing and extending their knowledge. They often present their findings using PowerPoint.

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

The provision for gifted history pupils is good.

- The school regularly updates its register of gifted history pupils and there are plans to establish a history club specifically for these pupils.
- Gifted history pupils follow courses designed to meet their needs at Liverpool Hope University.
- They also attend regular sessions organised by the local authority and have benefited from workshops on the Tudors and also on the Ancient Egyptians.

- Levels of challenge in lessons are high and gifted history students are encouraged to justify their interpretation of evidence and make comments on the value of the sources available to them.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that assessment practice linked to pupils' acquisition of historical skills is consistent in quality across the school.

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