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Miss S Carpenter
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Dear Miss Carpenter

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 February 2009 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 provision for gifted 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 you, nominated staff and pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of students' work and the observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Pupils make good progress and are developing their knowledge, understanding and skills well. Pupils in Year 2, for example, know how seaside holidays have changed over time, while those in Year 6 have good knowledge and understanding of aspects of Victorian life.
- At all ages, pupils are developing their chronological understanding well. They know the sequence of major events through the use of timelines. Pupils know how to use different types of historical evidence and can make logical deductions from these. Some have good skills of interpretation.

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They are keen to participate in whole-class discussions and maintain their concentration on the activities set. They work constructively with each other and with the adults. Some are very interested in history and undertake research work at length, often in their own time.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Activities are well organised and meet the various needs of the pupils. The lesson observed had a good learning environment.
- The good questioning skills extend the pupils' understanding.
- Pupils' respond well to the activities and they are regularly praised by the adults.
- Time is used efficiently and activities are well paced.
- Although lessons are planned in some detail, assessment procedures are not routinely identified in the planning. Marking is regularly undertaken but targets for further improvement are not regularly set.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and it meets requirements.
- The pupils' learning experiences are enriched by a study of local history and visits to a good range of historical places. This includes learning about the life of Rupert Brooke, once a local resident, and visits to local museums in Cambridge. Visits are also regularly organised to Peterborough Cathedral when studying the Tudors. In addition, the school has organised Viking Days using a visiting group, and local residents come to talk to pupils about the past. Pupils say how much they value such visits and experiences.

Leadership and management of history

The leadership and management of history are good.

- The subject is led by a relatively new teacher who is ably supported by the previous subject leader. Together, they have good knowledge and understanding of strengths in history and what needs to be developed further.
- The school has collected a good range of historical resources over recent years and these are regularly used in lessons.

Subject issue: ICT

The provision and use of ICT is good.

- Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard and this used well by both the teacher and the pupils.

- Pupils regularly use computers for research work in history and for word processing. They download appropriate information from the internet and can create PowerPoint presentations. However, data handling skills are not developed as well.
- The school makes good use of other audio-visual resources, for example recording and using relevant television programmes.

Subject issue: gifted history pupils

The provision for gifted history pupils is good.

- The school is aware of which pupils are gifted in history and appropriate extension work is set for them in lessons. They are also set additional research work for their independent study.
- Such pupils are confident, articulate and can write extensively. The teachers ensure that appropriate questioning is directed at them in lessons to extend their understanding.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that lesson planning and the marking of pupils' work identifies targets for particular groups and individuals, and that progress towards these targets is regularly evaluated
- ensuring that pupils' skills in handling data when using ICT in history are improved.

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