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Mrs C Julian
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Julian

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 June 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 promotion of independent learning in history and on the subject's contribution to community cohesion.

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, staff and pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of one lesson. Further lessons could not be observed because of the timing of the inspection.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are average.

- Pupils make good progress over time. They are developing their knowledge and understanding of a range of topics, including the Tudor monarchs, aspects of Ancient Greece and the Victorian period.
- Pupils are beginning to ask relevant questions when handling artefacts. They are making good deductions of how certain artefacts may have been used. However, their use of a wider range of historical sources is more limited.

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They settle down quickly. They work well with each other and with the adults. Many have a keen interest in learning about the past.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons offer pupils a good range of learning activities. The needs of the different abilities are well known to teachers and appropriate activities are planned for them.
- Questioning skills are used well to extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Time is efficiently used and periodic whole-class teaching points are made to inject pace to the learning.
- Pupils are interested in the subject and they work well in small groups and with the adults. There is a good learning environment.
- Pupils' work is routinely marked and helpful comments are made on how they can improve their work. The pupils value these comments.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is generally good.

- The curriculum is broad and it meets requirements. It is driven by the units of study formulated by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Pupils' learning experiences are significantly enhanced through visits to a wide range of historical places, including Bolsover Castle, Derby Museum, Masson Mill, the Tramway Museum and Haddon Hall. Much useful work is also undertaken in and around the village of Crich.
- The curriculum is broad but pupils do not always study the units to the required depth. This means they sometimes have a superficial understanding of the period being covered.

Leadership and management of history

The leadership and management of history are good.

- The subject is led and managed well in this small school. The subject leader has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in history through evaluating the teaching, scrutinising pupils' work and canvassing the views of pupils.
- There is a good team spirit among the staff and ideas for developing the subject are routinely shared. Detailed procedures for assessing pupils' progress and analysing their strengths and weaknesses in the subject have been formulated.

Subject issue: the promotion of independent learning

The promotion of pupils' independent learning is good.

- There is a strong tradition in the teaching to developing pupils' independent learning. Pupils are constantly encouraged to ask questions and they are regularly set independent research tasks. For example, pupils were observed asking relevant questions about a range of artefacts. Pupils also commented on how much they valued using computers for research purposes, for example about the Indus Valley civilisation.

Subject issue: the subject's contribution to community cohesion

The subject's contribution to community cohesion is good.

- The school has very strong links with its local community. Pupils regularly go to a local community centre to help elderly people and to ask them questions about life in the past.
- Pupils are regularly taken on walks around the village and understand how their community has changed over the years. Pupils' global understanding is being developed through the study of topics, for example the Indus Valley civilisation and Ancient Egypt. However, their understanding of how the United Kingdom has developed into a culturally and ethnically diverse society is underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that all the study units are taught to the required depth so that pupils' historical knowledge, understanding and skills are enhanced
- ensuring that the subject contributes more to pupils' preparation for life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

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