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02 July 2009

Mrs G Hampton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Hampton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 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 three lessons.

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 in lessons and over time. Those in Year 2, for example, have a good understanding of the Great Fire of London and can put events in chronological order.
- Pupils in Year 6 have good knowledge of the lives of significant individuals, for example Sir Walter Raleigh, Anne Frank, Winston Churchill and John Lennon. The higher attainers write extensively, and for different audiences and purposes.
- Pupils are developing their sense of chronology well through the use of timelines. They work well with different historical sources but their

broader historical skills, for example of historical enquiry and interpretation, are generally underdeveloped.

- The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They work well in groups and with the adults. They maintain their concentration on the tasks set. They are very friendly in their outlook to learning and say how much they enjoy studying history.

### Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with outstanding features.

- Lessons are planned in detail and the needs of the various abilities are identified. These are then met through the setting of varied activities and the use of well targeted additional adult support.
- There is a good learning environment in lessons. Pupils are aware of routines and expectations and they respond well to the learning activities set. Many pupils are eager to answer questions in class discussions.
- The organisation and management of lessons are sometimes excellent. Groups of pupils and their learning activities are meticulously managed to ensure maximum progress.
- There is good oral feedback to pupils. In addition, their work is regularly marked. Pupils say they find the evaluative comments useful in helping them to improve their work.
- There is good challenge in the open-ended learning activities which are routinely identified for the pupils. Time is efficiently used, leading to good pace to the pupils' learning.
- Good use is routinely made of the interactive whiteboard by teachers and of computers by pupils.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is generally good.

- The curriculum is broad and it meets requirements. However, there is a slight imbalance at Key Stage 2 and the rationale for the organisation of the Programmes of Study at Key Stage 2 is not always clear.
- There are outstanding opportunities for pupils to learn outside the classroom. Younger pupils undertake local walks around the school to see how buildings have changed over time, while older pupils spend a week at Llandudno, studying historical and other aspects of the town and surrounding areas. In addition, pupils have visited the Beatles Museum in Liverpool, Shugborough Hall, Cannock Chase Museum and Hanley Museum.
- The school regularly invites visitors to talk to pupils about history, for example about Roman times and about aspects of the Second World War.

## Leadership and management of history

The leadership and management of history are generally good.

- The current subject leader has only been in post for about one year. She also has responsibility for leading two other subjects within the school.
- She has developed a good understanding of the subject through the monitoring of planning, discussions with other staff, observing some teaching and learning, and scrutinising pupils' work.
- The subject is undergoing some radical changes to planning as part of a whole-school reorganisation of the curriculum from September 2009. The subject leader is contributing to this and is anxious to ensure that the integrity of the subject is maintained within the proposed cross-curricular approach.

Subject issue: the promotion of independent learning

The promotion of pupils' independent learning is good with outstanding features.

- Pupils are taught from an early age on how to be independent learners. They work well in groups, participate enthusiastically in role play, and work with little supervision on the computers.
- Some excellent independent research work has been done by the higher attaining pupils, especially in Key Stage 2. They write extensively and have worked hard to acquire knowledge about historical figures, for example Florence Nightingale.

Subject issue: the subject's contribution to community cohesion

The subject's contribution to community cohesion is good.

- Pupils have a good understanding of the community around them. They develop this through the study of local history and the school's use of outside visitors.
- Pupils' global understanding is enhanced through the study of relevant topics, for example studying the 'I have a dream' speech by Martin Luther King. In addition, good links have been developed through information and communication technology with schools in Spain, Sweden and Turkey. However, the subject's contribution to preparing pupils for life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society is underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that pupils develop a broader range of historical skills, including those of historical enquiry and interpretation
- ensuring that there is a clear rationale for the organisation of the history curriculum and that it is better balanced across Key Stage 2.

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