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Mrs P Bell
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Dear Mrs Bell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 July 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 contribution of history to community cohesion and the development of independent learning in history.

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 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

Achievement is good and standards are above average.

- Pupils make good progress and are developing good historical knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Year 2, for example, know about the life and work of Florence Nightingale, while those in Year 5 know and understand about life in the Indus Valley.
- Historical skills are being developed well throughout the school. For example, time lines are used effectively to develop chronological understanding and discussion with pupils shows this skill being reinforced in all classes.

- Pupils are developing good research and enquiry skills and have a good understanding of the concepts of change and continuity.
- Older pupils understand that evidence can be interpreted in different ways and that different interpretations are valid as long as they are supported with appropriate evidence.
- History makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are well motivated in their learning and are keen to engage in discussion. They say that history is 'fun' and that they are 'always learning something new'.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have realistically high expectations. They enjoy teaching history, make lessons interesting and their planning is thorough. Good questioning prompts pupils to think and helps them to consider a range of points when formulating their ideas and answers.
- The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are regularly considered. Teaching assistants give good support. However, the needs of higher attaining pupils are not always fully met because tasks do not always challenge them sufficiently.
- Teachers work hard to motivate and engage pupils, although older pupils say that they would like more practical activities. Pupils use information and communication technology well for research and for producing PowerPoint presentations.
- Pupils' work is marked, comments are helpful and teachers give praise. However, the comments do not give sufficient subject-specific advice on how pupils can improve their work.
- Pupils' work is assessed and recorded, and progress in history is linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets requirements. The school follows a rolling two-year programme and a history topic is covered in each term for pupils in Key Stage 2.
- The school is considering curriculum changes and it is aware of the importance of ensuring that history retains its identity and integrity within any new curriculum framework.
- Cross-curricular links are strong. Literacy is well developed in all year groups in history and opportunities are regularly taken to link with other subjects, for example with art, drama, design and technology, and geography.
- The curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of visits to places of historical interest, such as Barley Hall and the Jorvik Centre in York, and to the Thackray Museum in Leeds. These visits are integrated into the schemes of work. Pupils say how much they enjoy the visits, listening to the visitors who come into school, and how these activities

help their learning. As one pupil said, 'they help you understand the atmosphere and get the feel of a topic'.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are good.

- As subject leader, as well as being headteacher, you undertake your role efficiently and effectively. You are well supported by the other teachers and all of you recognise the importance of developing history for all pupils.
- The subject is well organised, planning is thorough and the limited resources are used wisely.
- You are developing a clear picture of the strengths and areas for development in history, and the action plan has appropriate objectives.
- As part of a rolling two-year cycle you monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the subject well. This involves lesson observations and a scrutiny of the pupils' work. The pupils' comments on history written prior to this inspection revealed, among other things, much enthusiasm for the subject. However, seeking pupils' views formally is not yet a regular occurrence.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is satisfactory.

- Pupils are developing a sound understanding of the importance of the local community. This is achieved through visits to local places of historical interest and local museums, such as the Pump Museum and the Turkish Baths in Harrogate. Visitors regularly come into school to talk about local history and their experiences of how life has changed.
- Global understanding is developed through the study of appropriate topics, such as Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and the Indus Valley civilisation. However, the preparation of pupils for life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society is limited and the school is aware of this.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Independent learning is effectively developed in all classes and pupils develop good enquiry skills from an early stage. They are encouraged to ask questions and find out for themselves. This approach is strengthened further up the school through pupils being asked what they know and what they want to know prior to starting their work on a topic. By incorporating their ideas into the work, pupils become more involved in taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils enjoy undertaking research using books and computers, and they are keen to look at artefacts and to talk to visitors.
- Pupils are well behaved and, with minimum supervision, work well in pairs and in groups, as well as on their own.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving marking and written feedback to ensure that pupils are given precise advice on how they can improve their work in history
- developing the curriculum to prepare pupils more effectively 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

Michael Maddison
Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted's Specialist Adviser for History