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Mrs P Dyson  
Barlby Bridge Community Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Dyson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 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 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are average.

- Pupils make good progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Year 4, for example, know a great deal about the Ancient Egyptians, and those in Year 6 can talk confidently and fluently about Britain since 1948.
- Pupils are developing good research and enquiry skills. They have the opportunity to look at a range of evidence, including artefacts. Pupils in Year 4, for example, particularly enjoyed having to explain the importance of a range of items in a Victorian version of the television programme, 'Dragons Den'.

- Pupils can make appropriate inferences from sources. Those in Year 2, for example, could not only describe what they could see in a picture of Mary Seacole and injured soldiers in the Crimea but they could also point to what this suggested.
- Pupils' chronological understanding is well developed. For example, pupils in Year 1 were seen correctly sequencing photographs of seaside holidays from the 1950s to the present day and explaining the reasons for their choices.
- History makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are well motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups. They say they enjoy history because 'it is fun' and because 'we always learn new information which helps us work things out'.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, enjoy teaching history and teach the subject with enthusiasm.
- Lessons are well planned and have pace which helps to keep pupils well focused on their learning. Teachers have realistically high expectations.
- Teachers use a range of activities, including role play, to engage pupils and keep them motivated. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions, to seek out answers and to use the information to produce accurate explanations.
- Learning is well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons by adults and through specific tasks. The needs of more able pupils are also well met through activities which engage and challenge them.
- Work is carefully marked. Praise is given and helpful comments are made. However, the guidance given is rather general and does not include sufficient subject-specific comments.
- Pupils' achievement is assessed and recorded. However, the school is aware that the criteria for judging performance in each history topic are unclear.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets requirements. Apart from the spring term in Year 6, pupils benefit from undertaking some work in history in each term in both key stages.
- For the last two years, history has been taught within an integrated structure which links subjects to themes. The school is coming to the end of the first cycle of this rolling two-year curriculum and both teachers and pupils say how much they enjoy this approach. The school is aware of the importance of undertaking an evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach and to ensuring that history retains its integrity within the curriculum.

- Cross-curricular links are strong and help to support pupils' learning. Literacy, for example, is developed effectively in history in all year groups, and opportunities are taken to link with other subjects, including art, drama, geography, and design and technology.
- Learning outside the classroom makes a significant contribution to the interest and engagement of pupils, and most school visits have a history focus. Pupils say how much they enjoy these activities and how they make their learning more interesting. Pupils also enjoy spending time immersed in the period which they are studying, as in the case of Year 4 and the Victorian day.

### Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are good.

- The subject coordinator, who also has responsibility for art, and design and technology, is enthusiastic about her role. She works hard and her commitment is much appreciated by her colleagues.
- The subject is well organised and planning is thorough. The coordinator has a good understanding of the strengths of the subject and the areas for further development.
- The work of the coordinator in monitoring planning is well established. However, her role in evaluating the effectiveness of history across the school is not fully developed.

### Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

- History makes a strong contribution to developing pupils' awareness of the community around them. This is achieved through incorporating local history into curriculum topics and through visits to local places of historical interest.
- Pupils are taught about Britain's cultural and ethnic heritage through, for example, studying the lives of Mary Seacole in the Crimean War and of Walter Tull, one of the first black footballers.
- Pupils' global awareness is being developed through the study of such topics as Ancient Egypt. Their understanding of recent migration is being strengthened through work on Polish culture and history.
- Relationships are positive, and displays, assemblies and video and photographic records celebrate pupils' achievements.

### Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Independent learning is effectively developed through pupils being asked at the start of each topic what they know and what they want to know. Their ideas are incorporated into the teachers' planning, enabling pupils to become more involved in taking responsibility for their own learning.

- Pupils work well individually or in small groups. They focus on the tasks set, maintain their concentration well and say how much they enjoy finding things out for themselves.
- Pupils are often set research activities and they enjoy using computers for this purpose and for recording their findings in, for example, PowerPoint presentations.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consolidating assessment practice and developing marking so that pupils receive sufficient subject-specific comments on how to improve
- consolidating the role of the subject coordinator so that she is able to monitor and evaluate history across the school more effectively.

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