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Mrs R Howie
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Howie

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: History

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during the visit on 26 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 history 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 in lessons and achievement through the Key Stages is good. Pupils develop accurate knowledge of the key aspects of the topics they study and develop their historical skills well.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make good progress in developing their understanding of the Second World War and the Blitz. They are particularly interested in how children were evacuated and looked after away from their parents.
- A key characteristic of the school's history programme is the development of historical skills and this is evident in the way pupils

across the school can evaluate historical sources accurately and make sound inferences. This was well illustrated when Years 1 and 2 were invited to use sources to plan a museum celebrating the life and times of Grace Darling.

- Pupils say they enjoy their history lessons and particularly like finding out about their local area.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They settle to their tasks quickly and develop their social skills well. They help each other out in discussions and share their ideas willingly. They listen carefully and are confident enough to ask questions when they are unsure.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well to ask interesting and stimulating questions. Feedback in books and on sheets is good and pupils say teachers' comments help them to improve their work.
- Tasks are well paced and time is used effectively to ensure that all pupils can contribute something of value to the lessons.
- Classroom displays are designed well to enable pupils to get a sense of period and to celebrate their finished products.
- Pupils are generally set challenging tasks, particularly in relation to evaluating sources and explaining how reliable they are for showing what conditions were like.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about their history work and involve the pupils in planning their work well.
- Teachers use assessment for learning well, but the use of new 'I can' statements is inconsistent across the school and teachers lack confidence in making end of key stage level of attainment judgements.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- The school has worked hard to plan an interesting themed and skills-based curriculum within which history acts as a driver for a number of the key themes.
- The links across subjects are well planned so that pupils develop their knowledge well and are encouraged to make their own connections between themes and topics.
- There is strong continuity and progression through the key stages and skills are revisited very effectively.
- Pupils' history experiences are supported very well by a wide range of history visits and themed residential events. Very good use is made of local museum services and theatre groups. Parents are often involved with their children's work and researching the visits made.
- History lessons are very well supported by the use of information and communication technology (ICT), as with preparing historical accounts of life in Roman times and the Second World War. The computer room is used for both discrete ICT education and history lessons.

- The school provides professional development to other local authorities on developing a skills-based curriculum.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are outstanding.

- The headteacher currently jointly shares the leadership of the subject with a new curriculum lead member of staff and she is helping her to develop the subject extremely well. There is clear direction for the subject and extremely good documentation and subject planning.
- The joint leads have developed an accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses and the subject self-evaluation is based on rigorous monitoring of teaching and regular scrutiny of the work of pupils.
- Assessment procedures are good and the joint leads have made excellent plans to increase the accuracy and rigour of regular assessments based on 'I can' statements, and to improve the level of attainment judgements made by teachers at the end of term and key stages.
- The outstanding leadership and management have contributed to the subject being highly popular across the school and have brought about rapid improvement in standards and achievement in recent years.
- Teachers are supported well by the subject leaders and all have had excellent training in developing new approaches to history teaching.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

- History makes a strong contribution to enhancing pupils' awareness and understanding of the community around them. The local history aspects and world topics help to cement this good contribution.
- Pupils were able to talk knowledgeably about different cultures and religions and work in books and presentations demonstrated they were becoming aware of life in a culturally diverse society.
- The school has evaluated its contribution to community cohesion and is aware of what it needs to do further to strengthen its understanding of the needs of different groups in its locality.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Pupils work in a very supportive environment where they are often challenged to 'think for themselves' about aspects of topics and to come up with their own ideas.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to work individually and with others. They are also given many tasks to do outside the classroom at home, and pupils said they value these activities.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about undertaking their own researches into history topics and liked presenting their findings to the rest of the class.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring greater consistency in the way teachers use the new self-evaluation statements in history
- ensuring that more accurate and rigorous level of attainment judgements are introduced and embedded across the school.

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

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector