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18 September 2009

Mrs N Richardson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Richardson

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: History

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during the visit on 10 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 students, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of students' work and the observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are average.

- Many pupils enter the school with exceptionally low skills, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in history and their knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying are good.
- Children in the Reception class make accurate comparisons between modern and vintage cars. Moreover, pupils' chronological skills are fostered well, and by Year 3, they can identify anachronisms when considering what life was like in Tudor times. In Year 4, they are becoming aware of different views on the events of the Spanish

Armada and by Year 5 they are empathising with how children working in the cotton mills must have felt.

- Pupils know the range of evidence, which historians use to make their judgements, but are less secure in their understanding of the value of different kinds of sources. More able pupils make perceptive comments on the nature of bias but many pupils are not yet aware of the pitfalls in the handling of some source material.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They love history, behave impeccably and are fully engaged in both the subject-matter and the activities in class. They work in pairs and in groups with a maturity, which belies their years and are only too willing to help each other.

## Quality of teaching and learning

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

- Teachers know their pupils well and provide them with a variety of activities to foster their speaking and listening skills and to engage them in the story of history.
- Role-play, drama and collaborative work are the order of the day in most lessons and pupils rise to the high expectations their teachers have of them. For example, in an excellent Year 2 lesson, pupils acted as 'penny lick' and ice cream sellers and explained with confidence why ice cream was a luxury in Victorian times and was often only consumed by rich people who had icehouses in their mansions.
- Staff work hard to prepare resources which meet the individual needs of their pupils and challenge them to think more deeply about the topics they are studying. Teaching assistants are fully involved in lesson preparation and ensure, for example, that pupils new to learning English and those who sometimes find the work difficult can take full advantage in all the activities on offer.
- Assessment is good and improving. Teachers are now placing more emphasis on self and peer assessment and are planning to introduce new assessment procedures which take more account of pupils' skills development in history. Ongoing assessment in class is of a high order and both teachers and teaching assistants make regular visits to pairs and to groups to gauge performance, to provide support and to challenge further.

## Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum fully meets requirements and is enhanced by a range of visits and visitors. Pupils speak warmly, for example, about their trip to Hall I'th Wood and enjoy the follow-up work on Tudor houses when they return to school. The visit to Skipton Castle is a highlight of the year and pupils also benefit from regular use of role play areas e.g. Pudding Lane.
- History features strongly in the vibrant display in classrooms and on corridors. Models of Tudor houses, a variety of artefacts and artwork on Ancient Egypt keep history at the forefront of pupils' minds. Their

workbooks, too, are beautifully presented and their projects on film demonstrate the links, which teachers help pupils to make, with English, art and design, and drama.

- Teachers recognise that there is an imbalance between pupils' acquisition of discrete skills and their knowledge and understanding of historical topics.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are good.

- The talented history co-ordinator leads by example and fosters high levels of teamwork amongst all staff who have a clear vision for how the subject should develop.
- Self-evaluation is outstanding. It is enhanced by collaborative planning across key stages, regular work scrutiny and a range of strategies to elicit the views of pupils.
- Long, medium and short term planning is good and teachers are working hard to develop modules which place more emphasis on fostering the development of pupils' historical skills.
- The quality and extent of history resources are good and teachers and pupils use new technology most effectively as a learning tool.
- The school is rightly proud of its in-service training, much of it delivered internally. However, external opportunities for continuing professional development for staff in relation to the teaching and learning of history are few and far between.

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

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

- The school recognises that many of its pupils have few opportunities to travel outside the immediate locality. As a result, teachers work hard to provide them with a curriculum which is enriched by a variety of historical visits within Bolton and further afield in order that they can gain experience of communities and cultures which are different to their own.
- The newly-mounted memorial boards celebrate the lives and experiences of local people during the First World War. Pupils are proud to show these to visitors and demonstrate a good understanding of the history of their school.

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

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Teachers give pupils many opportunities to pursue private research; paired and group work in class encourages pupils to make their own judgements based on the evidence available to them. For example, in an excellent Year 6 lesson, pupils used the Internet with skill to prepare their presentations to the *Antiques Roadshow*, which was filmed by their classmates.

- Pupils say how much they enjoy 'finding things out for ourselves'. They regularly research their own historical interests outside school and produce high-quality assignments voluntarily at home.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring there is a better balance in the curriculum between pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying and their acquisition of discrete historical skills
- providing non-specialist teachers of history with relevant subject-specific in-service training.

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

Jim Kidd  
Additional Inspector