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Mrs S Collins  
Headteacher  
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School  
St Faith's Road  
Alcester  
Warwickshire  
B49 6AG

Dear Mrs Collins

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 October 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 included interviews with you, staff and pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement is good.

- Pupils make good progress from relatively low starting points and attain standards which are average for their ages, with a few attaining even higher standards. Older pupils know about every day life in Roman times, while the younger pupils are extending their knowledge and understanding of the Gunpowder Plot. Pupils' chronological understanding is being developed well.

- Although pupils' historical knowledge and understanding are good, their skills are not as well developed. They are aware that we know about the past through the use of different historical sources but they do not know, for example, how to evaluate the reliability of sources.
- Pupils' skills in literacy are being developed well through the study of history. The higher attaining pupils, in particular, can write extensively, and for different audiences and purposes. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are being enhanced well.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are friendly and work well with each other and with the adults. They sustain their concentration on the tasks set.

#### Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching is good.

- A good range of learning activities is planned for the different abilities of the pupils. This leads to good challenge for all, with an emphasis on developing pupils' independent learning.
- The activities are paced well with an efficient use of time. Pupils respond well to the structured activities and to the brisk pace of the learning.
- Teachers use good questioning skills to elicit good responses from the pupils. These skills consolidate the pupils' learning, for example about everyday life in Roman times.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and make good progress. Most commented on how much they enjoy studying about the past.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and evaluative comments are made. There is some evidence of self-assessment by the pupils, for example about the Gunpowder Plot. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils respond to the written comments.

#### Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and meets requirements. Pupils study an appropriate range of topics in their mixed-age year groups.
- The history curriculum has recently been reviewed in the light of changes to the whole school curriculum. Good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' historical knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils enjoy studying the subject and their experiences are broadened through visits to a good range of historical places. These include visits to local places of interest, such as Alcester Museum and Coughton Court.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good.

- The part-time subject leader provides good leadership and direction for the subject. She has a good understanding of requirements and, although in school for only half the week, has done well to ensure that the subject moves forward.
- The subject leader monitors provision through regular discussions with staff and scrutinising pupils' work when appropriate. However, she does not have time to undertake any formal observations of lessons.
- There is detailed documentation for the subject and appropriate schemes of work have been drawn up. Some are being revised at the moment.
- The subject leader keeps abreast of developments in the subject through attendance at relevant local meetings. However, she has not been able to attend any training in history for quite some time.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is satisfactory.

- Pupils learn well about their locality and participate in a good range of local activities. The school is involved in local church affairs and pupils regularly raise money for charities, for example Water Aid.
- Pupils' global understanding is developed through the study of a wide range of relevant topics, including Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Kenya. Their understanding of Britain's cultural and religious diversity, however, is limited. The school is aware of this and is taking appropriate action.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Pupils undertake a good range of independent learning. The older pupils, for example, can work for sustained periods on the computers and are developing their research skills well. Some pupils are keen to undertake additional research at home.
- Pupils work well together in pairs and in small groups. They are enthused by activities, for example writing plays about Roman times, and can work in small groups with little adult supervision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that pupils' historical skills are better developed through more explicit planning for them in schemes of work and in lessons, and that there is regular evaluation of the teaching of historical skills across the school
- ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation role of the subject leader is strengthened by allowing her to undertake the periodic observation of history lessons, talking more formally to pupils about their experiences in

history, and ensuring that she has greater opportunities to attend relevant professional development in the subject.

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  
Additional Inspector