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Miss W Atkinson  
Headteacher  
Edith Moorhouse Primary School  
Lawton Avenue  
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Dear Miss Atkinson

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 30 November 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements 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 is satisfactory.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards which are broadly average for their ages. There is no discernible difference between the performance of different groups of pupils. Older pupils know about everyday life during the Second World War, while the younger pupils are extending their knowledge and understanding of the Gunpowder Plot. Pupils' chronological understanding is being developed soundly.
- Pupils' historical skills are developed adequately together with their knowledge and understanding of history. They are aware that we know

about the past through written and other forms of evidence but they are less sure about how to assess the validity and reliability of sources.

- Pupils' skills in literacy are being developed satisfactorily through the study of history. The higher achieving pupils can write at length about their topics and communicate their interests well in a range of ways, for example by creating presentations using information and communication technology (ICT) and devising stimulating posters. The quality of work in literacy and communications is not consistently as good for most pupils. Pupils' skills in ICT are being developed well through history, as was demonstrated in a good use of ICT to display historical facts about the different periods used for the history fashion parade in assembly.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are friendly and keen to learn. They work well together in groups as well on their own. They sustain their focus on the tasks set.

### Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- A reasonable range of learning activities is planned for the different abilities of the pupils. There is good and outstanding practice in some lessons, but the level of challenge for pupils is not consistently as good across the school. Pupils say they are sometimes bored when the teacher talks for too long.
- In the good and outstanding lessons, activities are well paced with an efficient use of time. Pupils respond well to the structured activities and to the brisk pace of the learning.
- Teachers use questioning skills to elicit accurate responses from the pupils. These skills consolidate pupils' learning, for example about how technology has affected people's lives over time.
- Pupils enjoy their learning when tasks are stimulating, such as when they make models and construct village communities based on evidence found in books and on the internet. Most valued the contribution of outside speakers and visitors who informed them in exciting ways about life when they were young.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and evaluative comments are made. However, teachers do not monitor pupils' progress in history in a consistent way across the school.

### Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- The curriculum 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. School leaders are committed to

maintaining appropriate focus on subject content when it adopts a more skills-based approach to learning.

- Pupils enjoy studying the subject and their experiences are broadened through a limited number of visits to historical sites. Also, the school makes good use of the county's museum service loan boxes of artefacts to schools and museum staff visit the school to lead sessions for pupils.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is satisfactory.

- The subject coordinator provides satisfactory leadership and direction for the subject. She has an adequate understanding of requirements and is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject.
- The subject coordinator monitors provision through regular discussions with staff and scrutinising pupils' work when appropriate. However, she does not undertake enough 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 to allow for more skills-based work.
- The subject coordinator has not been able to attend any training in history for quite some time, but she is visiting another local school to help her extend her experience of how history has developed in other contexts.

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

The contribution of history to community cohesion is satisfactory.

- Pupils learn adequately about their locality and participate in a range of local activities. The school has made visits to the nearby air-force base to see some aspects of its work.
- Pupils' global understanding is developed through the study of a suitable range of topics, including Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and a village in Kenya. Their understanding of Britain's cultural and religious diversity, however, is limited.

#### 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 activities. The more able pupils work for sustained periods on topics that interest and stimulate them. ICT is used effectively to develop their research skills well. All pupils are expected to undertake research at home.
- Pupils work well together and often help each other out. They are good at thinking things through and reflecting widely on some topics.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that there is a formal assessment process for history within the school to enable the coordinator to have a firmer grasp of how well pupils make progress in different year groups
- ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation role of the subject leader is strengthened by allowing her to undertake periodic observation of history lessons and to make more regular evaluations of the quality of teaching.

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