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16 February 2010

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Dear Mr Tobin

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 1 December 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Pupils enter the school with well below average skills in language and literacy. As a result of very impressive teaching and a curriculum which emphasises that history is all around us, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make outstanding progress in history. They acquire historical skills at a rapid rate and their knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying are well above that usually found.
- In the Reception class, for example, children's chronological skills are enhanced very effectively through a comparison of photographs of children at different ages. They are encouraged to talk about their

birthdays and demonstrate their skills by telling the class what they can do now which they couldn't do when they were babies.

- Pupils in Year 5 talk accurately and with confidence about living conditions at the time of King John, and in Year 6 they demonstrate an excellent awareness of how historians arrive at their judgements. Older pupils are fully aware of the nature of bias.
- Pupils in all years love history and levels of engagement in lessons are outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and pupils work together exceptionally well in pairs and groups.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching of history is outstanding.

- Pupils respond to high levels of challenge in lessons with the utmost enthusiasm and are always extremely keen to answer questions.
- Teachers place good emphasis on speaking and writing and there are many opportunities for pupils to present their work to their peers and to take part in role-play.
- Teachers are extremely creative in their use of information and communication technology. For example, excellent use is made of digital and audio presentations to enhance pupils' understanding of medieval castles.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those new to English, is excellent and enables them to take full advantage of excellent teaching. As a result, they make the same outstanding progress as their peers.
- Assessment is good overall and teachers are now working on developing procedures which will give them an even more accurate view of how well individual pupils are acquiring historical skills.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the history curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is planned comprehensively and fully meets requirements. It provides an ideal balance between content and the acquisition of historical skills. House groups are based on historical figures relevant to the local community, such as Winston Churchill.
- Pupils speak highly of the wide variety of historical trips, to Quarry Bank Mill, for example. Indeed, there is at least one trip each year and pupils enjoy dressing up in Tudor costume at Shibden Hall.
- Local history is fostered too and pupils in Year 6 comment extensively on the Victorian history of Chadderton. They also visit the local war memorial on Remembrance Day.
- Drama and role-play are important elements of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 2 were delighted to act as doctors, nurses and patients at Scutari

Hospital as they found out more about Florence Nightingale's work. Year 6 pupils presented their own historical production, 'The Key Master', and took the whole school on a journey back in time.

- Teachers amend the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of their pupils and have introduced history topics related to Mexico to support pupils' understanding of Spanish.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management of history is outstanding.

- Both history coordinators lead by example and work hard to ensure that their pupils receive the very best they can offer. Their clear vision for development is shared by all staff.
- Staff are committed to ongoing improvement and take considerable account of pupils' views when evaluating new developments in the subject. The coordinators' accurate views of performance in history are enhanced by collaborative planning across each key stage. There is an overriding emphasis on ensuring that pupils only receive the very best learning opportunities.
- There is a wide variety of relevant resources for teaching and learning in history. Human resources are used exceptionally well to support pupils who sometimes find the work difficult. Bilingual support in all years is of high quality.
- There are few opportunities for teachers to attend history-specific in-service training and so teachers are proactive in following their own research to elicit the very latest thinking on teaching and learning in the subject.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

- Teachers invite visitors from far and wide to talk about many aspects of the curriculum. They also make sure that pupils in each year take part in annual historical visits to experience cultures and communities which are different from their own.
- The history curriculum places considerable emphasis on studies of the local community and pupils have a keen understanding of the experiences of the inhabitants of Chadderton and Oldham in the Second World War, for example.
- The impact of its work is felt strongly across the school, though not all aspects of its work in this area are fully evaluated.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is outstanding.

- From the Reception class onwards, the school places much emphasis on pupils finding things out for themselves and taking responsibility for their own learning.
- In Year 2, for example, pupils are already adept at using the internet for research and they work individually and with partners to produce timelines and biographies of famous people. Their attitudes to learning and their skills in using new technology demonstrate that they are used to this approach and that personal research is becoming second nature to them. Such opportunities are seen in all year groups.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing assessment practice to ensure that teachers are even more aware of the progress made by each individual
- exploiting relevant subject-specific in-service training opportunities for teachers.

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