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1 April 2010

Mr M Scriven  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Scriven

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 22 March 2010 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, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress and attain standards that are above average.
- They show good knowledge and understanding of features of life in different historical periods. For example, Year 2 pupils could explain confidently and accurately how fire spread so rapidly in London in 1666 and the measures that had to be taken to tackle it.
- Pupils' understanding of chronology is good. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to sequence images of homes in the past and could position them appropriately on a timeline. They also showed a good understanding

of the complexities of the past, recognising that the Victorian period might be interpreted differently according to whether rich or poor people were the focus of study.

- Pupils understand that knowledge about the past can be built up using different types of material, such as books, websites and diary entries. However, they are less secure in knowing about and using the range of historical sources available for different periods.
- History makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. They enjoy this subject very much, 'it's fun', one said. Pupils particularly value the various visits and visitors that enrich the curriculum, and the other memorable experiences which are provided for them, such as Year 6's recent 'virtual museum'.

### Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and have a firm grasp of the importance of developing historical knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Detailed lesson plans include a variety of activities that engage pupils' interest well. History makes a good contribution to developing pupils' skills in writing.
- In lessons observed, teachers provided pupils with exciting opportunities to explore the past and discuss their ideas but learning was not sufficiently sharply focused on developing their historical skills.
- Teachers' marking is frequent, evaluative and encouraging but it seldom provides guidance on how pupils might improve their work in history.

### Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- History-focused topics for each year group are complemented increasingly by exploiting brief opportunities to develop historical understanding in other work. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, opportunities to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world provide a good foundation for later work in history.
- How historical skills should develop in each year group as pupils move through the school is set out clearly in a useful document. However, insufficient detail is provided on progression in organisation and communication, and how skills might be developed in particular topics in each year group is not identified.
- There is a strong and successful commitment to helping pupils to understand links between their various history studies and to establish a chronological framework within which to locate future topics.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject leader has a strong sense of purpose and a deep commitment to the value of history in the primary curriculum.
- She has very successfully fostered an enthusiasm for history that permeates the school and provides good support for staff in teaching the subject.
- There is a clear view of the strengths of the history provision and areas for development, underpinned by well-established assessment and moderation procedures, scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with pupils. There have been no recent opportunities for observing teaching and learning in the classrooms.
- Opportunities for professional development in history for the subject leader and other staff have been limited in recent years.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

- History makes a strong contribution to pupils' understanding of the local community. For example, they explore the Victorian streets nearby and, further afield, in Bristol and their role in the slave trade.
- The subject has played an important role in the school's recent 'Diversity Week' in which several key individuals from the past, such as Gandhi, provided a focus for pupils' work.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- There are good and frequent opportunities for pupils to generate their own questions about the past and establish what they want to find out, both in the school and in their homework. This has made a strong contribution to pupils' good historical knowledge and understanding.
- This work often involves the use of information and communication technology, for example the recent designing and making of board games in work on the Tudors in Year 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- identifying more precisely how the progression in historical skills applies to the history topics undertaken to help teachers:
  - focus learning in lessons more sharply
  - provide more guidance to pupils on how to improve in history

- monitoring and evaluating the impact of this development on the quality of teaching and learning, including opportunities for the subject leader to observe in classrooms.

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

Grahame Sherfield  
Her Majesty's Inspector