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Mrs R Zimmerman  
Acting Headteacher  
Springfield Community Special School  
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Dear Mrs Zimmerman

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 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 extent 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; conversations with pupils and observation of their reactions to teaching and other events; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and individual education plans; and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils make good progress in their learning in a variety of history-related activities. The school's detailed monitoring and recording of progress levels support this.
- Whenever appropriate, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, lead activities and support others. For example, one pupil with an interest in the Tudors was encouraged to demonstrate his Tudor dancing skills to others, who then followed his example well.

- The enthusiasm and good levels of active participation from pupils, particularly in the dance lesson, illustrate their pleasure and enjoyment in learning. Pupils make good progress in developing history-specific skills in a good range of cross-curricular contexts.

### Quality of teaching and learning in history

Teaching and learning in history are good.

- Teachers understand their pupils very well. Lessons are planned in considerable detail, carefully structured and well organised to meet pupils' varied needs. Individual target-setting is a strong feature of all lesson planning.
- The approach of all staff is energetic, enthusiastic and encouraging. The quality of care and the careful attention paid to pupils' responses in lessons are exemplary.
- Assessment is used well, adding to teachers' understanding of pupils. However, teachers lack confidence in assessing National Curriculum levels in history beyond the P levels.
- Pupils enjoy the lessons in which history is involved and were keen to point out their work on display. They indicated that they liked their visits to nearby places of historical interest.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum has recently been redesigned around historical themes which also provide pupils with opportunities to experience different situations and to develop skills and understanding.
- Carefully designed individualised programmes for pupils ensure that they are able to participate in history-related activities appropriate to their own needs and abilities.
- New approaches to the curriculum have been introduced based on the National Curriculum, but the school acknowledges that further broadening of themes and extra concentration on history skills have still to be undertaken.
- Opportunities for pupils to use a wide range of materials are built into the curriculum, as are opportunities for teachers to use interactive whiteboards successfully. Good use is made of local historical resources outside the school.
- The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to communicate and express themselves in a variety of ways. This is particularly effective when pupils explore what it was like to live in other times and places, how people dressed and the type of food they cooked.

### Leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject leader has a good understanding of how the subject can be set in the broader context of developing pupils' overall knowledge and skills.
- Working in close collaboration with other staff, she has worked very hard on developing new approaches to the history curriculum and has been successful in encouraging all staff to use it.
- Self-evaluation is thorough and long-term development plans are relevant and clear.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

Central to all the school does is the encouragement it gives to help pupils understand and support each other. Pupils respond well to this and it is one reason why behaviour in history lessons is so good. There is a full and varied range of trips to enable pupils to engage in activities beyond the school and meet other members of the community. As a result, community cohesion in the school is good and this has an impact on the wider community.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning is outstanding.

The school successfully empowers pupils as much as possible. Whenever the occasion allows, pupils in history are encouraged to work independently. Experiences, such as cutting, drawing and sequencing events, are very successful in building social awareness and self-confidence.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- helping staff gain greater confidence in assessing National Curriculum levels beyond the P scales
- ensuring that the new curriculum continues to develop broader themes and reinforces the development of historical skills.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As I explained previously, 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