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Mrs S Dorward
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dorward

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 25 February 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.

- Attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing their historical skills and understanding. Pupils undertake a wide range of research activities both inside and outside the classroom, such as finding out how Aztecs lived and how their customs were different from those in modern Britain.
- Teachers encourage pupils to think carefully before answering questions. In Year 1, pupils were encouraged to ask good questions about the artefacts that were drawn out of a pretend museum box.

- Pupils' personal development is good in history. Pupils commented that they find history is 'fun and very enjoyable'. They said that they write a lot about all the different topics they study and that they enjoy organising their ideas in written form. Pupils like learning about the local community and its industrial past. They enjoy comparing the past with the present and finding out about how the way they live now has developed from other times and places.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and pupils work well together in small groups.
- Pupils are encouraged to present their findings clearly to the rest of their group and then the whole class. They do this well.
- Pupils have accurate knowledge about the topics they study, and have a good understanding of the importance of basing their ideas on evidence. They like using laptop computers in class to do their own research.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers and learning assistants develop good relationships with pupils. Lessons are planned well to ensure that the activities engage all pupils. Lessons are based on clear learning objectives which are shared carefully with the pupils.
- Marking in pupils' books is good and indicates how they can improve their work. In lessons, teachers constantly communicate their expectations to pupils and give good support to those who find some topics difficult. They do not yet provide this quality of support for more able pupils in all lessons and, as a consequence, the progress of this group of pupils is not fast enough.
- Teachers monitor the progress of individual pupils in their development of general skills well, but have yet to monitor sufficiently clearly how well their specific historical skills are developing.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to develop pupils' understanding of topics and enhance their presentations to the class is good.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the history curriculum is good.

- The school has developed a good creative curriculum where history falls within a general humanities suite of topics. There is a rolling programme of history topics through the year. The curriculum successfully retains an appropriate focus on history within the wider thematic curriculum.
- Emphasis on developing pupils' history skills is good. Pupils know how to ask good questions about sources and artefacts and are developing their

understanding of key history concepts, such as change over time, well. Their understanding of interpretations in history is less secure.

- The school organises a good range of visits to places of historical interest locally and pupils say that they enjoy listening to members of the local history association give stimulating talks about Dawley's past.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- The subject lead-designate has only been in post for a few weeks but has already begun to build further on the good practice developed by her predecessor.
- The school has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of history. The annual subject reviews are rigorous and accurately identify issues for development and improvement.
- Classroom monitoring of history teaching is good and is supported by regular work reviews and discussions with pupils.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

- Pupils study a wide range of topics which introduce them to different cultures and ways of life both in this country and around the world. They understand how diverse their local community is, but have less understanding of diversity in Britain as a whole. History also links well with other subjects from time-to-time to explore different aspects of society and how different cultures have different values and faiths.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is outstanding.

- Pupils are given many opportunities to plan their own work and to research topics on their own. When working in groups, individual pupils are often challenged to feedback on their group's views about their individual 'expert focus'. There are good opportunities for pupils to use laptop computers to plan and organise their work. Pupils said how much they enjoyed being challenged to work in these ways.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the level of challenge in history for more able pupils
- embedding the monitoring and evaluation of specific history skills in all classes.

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