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Mrs B Cocken
Headteacher
St Stephen's Tockholes CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cocken

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 26 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 and analysis of pupils' work.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Children join the school with skills which are broadly in line with age-related expectations. They make good progress in gaining historical skills and reach above-average levels of attainment by the end of Year 6. They have a keen understanding of how historians make their judgements and are aware of a wide range of historical evidence. They know, too, that there are differing accounts of the past and explain that ancient Greek vases, for example, can offer a range of information on the Olympic Games and some of it, possibly, contradictory.
- They have a good knowledge of the topics they are studying and more able pupils give convincing reasons why history is such a valuable subject.

As they say, 'We still take ideas from the Ancients today and words like democracy come from the past too.'

- Pupils demonstrate good skills in information and communication technology and use the internet for personal research with confidence. They comment that different websites give different information about history and they are well aware of internet safety.
- Pupils' personal development is good. History is a very popular subject and pupils thoroughly enjoy it. The work in their exercise books shows that they work hard to complete their assignments.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Although no teaching was observed, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work demonstrate that the work they are required to do is challenging and that it is amended, often individually, to meet their particular needs.
- Marking is particularly impressive; it is regular, accurate and gives pupils detailed feedback on how they can improve their work. Comments at the end of pupils' assignments also encourage them to imagine how they would feel living during the periods they are studying.
- Pupils' historical skills are not assessed formally and they are not given sufficient opportunities to assess their own work and that of their classmates.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- History is currently taught as a discrete subject but the school is planning to introduce a creative, thematic curriculum at the beginning of the next academic year.
- Pupils prepare comprehensively for a wide range of historical visits. They benefit from visits to the JORVIC Viking Centre in York, to the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester and to the Octagon Theatre in Bolton.
- Pupils' learning in history is reinforced by extensive links to other subjects. For example, their knowledge and understanding of life in Victorian Britain is enhanced by the study of *Oliver Twist* and by role-play in relation to the Victorian classroom.
- The school has a wide range of resources which is particularly strong for the study of local history. Pupils benefit from the use of artefact boxes provided by Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- Leadership and management are a collaborative venture and this is quite understandable in such a small school. Teamwork is of the essence and staff work hard to complement the already impressive range of resources.
- Lesson preparation is good and short-term planning emphasises progression in pupils' acquisition of historical skills.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is now looking to ensure that the emphasis on the importance of history continues to be as strong in the new thematic curriculum.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is satisfactory.

- There are close links with the immediate environment and the school emphasises the study of local history to enable pupils to see their place within the local community. The school also has a link with a school in Bangladesh.
- Teachers recognise, however, that the curriculum does not always give pupils sufficient opportunities to study and celebrate the history of cultures which are not represented within the school community.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Pupils speak highly of the research they undertake on the internet and are proud of the work they have produced on the Ancient Greeks and Ancient Egyptians, for example.
- They have also spent considerable time researching the area around the school and have produced a presentation on the history of the local church.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- introducing more formal assessments of pupils' historical skills to have a better understanding of how well pupils are doing
- giving pupils more opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers
- identifying opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to become more aware of the history of cultures which are different to their own.

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

Jim Kidd
Additional Inspector