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20 July 2010

Mr S Putman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Putman

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 13 July 2010 to look at work 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons resulting in standards of attainment which are broadly average. Pupils with additional needs, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to their peers because of the good support they receive from specialist support staff in lessons.
- Pupils develop good subject knowledge through in-depth studies on topics such as the Egyptians, life in Tudor England, the Aztecs and the Blitz. Pupils produce detailed and carefully crafted project work which demonstrates their knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of history.
- Pupils also benefit from regular opportunities to undertake research. They make biggest gains when the focus of the research is carefully structured

by the teacher. Pupils produced good work, for example, on the life of Mary Seacole, because they were asked to find evidence to support particular judgements about her qualities and character. When research is unstructured, it sometimes results in pupils producing a list of disconnected facts. This inhibits the development of their analytical skills.

- Pupils' understanding of subject-specific skills in history is insecure. They are not yet able to articulate the characteristics of a good historian or what constitutes good work in history. They lack confidence in their understanding of chronology and of historical interpretations.
- Pupils clearly enjoy history and behave well in lessons. Sometimes their concentration lapses during prolonged teacher-led question and answer sessions.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- Teachers are highly enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed to teaching history as a subject to be discovered rather than received. They are skilled in using artefacts to promote pupils' interest, enthusiasm and fascination about the past.
- Resources to promote learning and enjoyment are wide ranging and well prepared and include information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to work with their learning partners and in groups, which promotes their good personal development.
- Teachers' use of assessment to promote learning in history is not yet developed sufficiently. Teachers and pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of how well pupils are developing their subject-specific skills. Teaching does not build systematically on pupils' previous learning because effective assessment systems and strategies to plan for progression are not yet sufficiently thorough. Pupils are not able to articulate how well they are doing in history. Marking, though often detailed, is not helpful enough in enabling pupils to understand how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve, and how to do it.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to study a wide range of topics in depth. Links with other subjects are used well to develop a sense of period, for example through art and music. The annual Year 4 Egyptian Day is a highlight of the year and is enjoyed enormously by pupils. They have good and regular opportunities to use ICT in history, and make increasingly good use of the school's intranet to share their work and ideas.

- Good and increasing provision to study local history is supported by regular trips and visits, for example to Mill Green Mill and the RAF Museum at Hendon. Excellent links with members of the local community are used well to promote pupils' enjoyment and understanding of history through, for example, their work with a local author.
- The curriculum is responsive to the diverse school community with good opportunities to study the history of different communities, particularly during Black History month.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- Leadership and management arrangements ensure that teachers receive good support in planning teaching and learning in history. Schemes of work are organised well with detailed lesson plans supported by good-quality digital resources.
- Leaders and managers recognise that assessment systems are not yet effective in enabling staff and pupils to have a clear enough understanding of how well pupils are doing in history. However, plans are in place to develop a more skills-based curriculum from September 2010 with accompanying assessment arrangements which will enable teachers to assess pupils' progress in history more accurately.
- The subject leader monitors the quality of teaching and learning through book scrutinies. Opportunities for her to drive forward teaching and learning in history through lesson observations, including peer observations are currently insufficient.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening assessment systems to ensure that teachers and pupils have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are doing in history
- improving the quality of marking and feedback, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve to meet their subject-specific targets and how to do it
- fully developing planning for progression in pupils' development of subject-specific skills in lessons and over time
- strengthening systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision in history.

I hope that 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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector