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Mr C Luckin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Luckin

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 23 March 2011 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Attainment is well above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and pupils of all abilities make extremely 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 people lived during the Second World War and how young people experienced being evacuees.
- Teachers encourage pupils to think carefully for themselves before answering questions. In Year 2, pupils were encouraged to ask good questions about how buildings in London had changed since the Great Fire and then had to place photographs of buildings in chronological order, giving reasons for their answers.

- Pupils' personal development is excellent. They said that they find history 'fun and hands on'. They say 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 through researching the census for the area and enjoy comparing the past with the present. They said that they would like particularly to see how life was like in Egyptian times and to compare this with today.
- Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and pupils work extremely well together in small groups and in pairs, as well as on their own.
- They are encouraged to present their findings clearly to the rest of their group and then the whole class. They do this extremely well.
- Pupils have accurate knowledge about the topics they study, and have a very good understanding of the importance of basing their ideas on evidence. This was demonstrated particularly well in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were asked to question different sources carefully, including video film, to decide whether the landing on the moon was a fake.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- Teachers and learning assistants develop excellent relationships with pupils. Lessons are planned very well to ensure that the activities engage all pupils. They are based on clear learning objectives which are shared carefully with the pupils.
- Teachers enjoy teaching history and are enthusiastic about the subject.
- Marking of pupils' work is good and indicates how they can improve their work. In lessons, teachers constantly communicate their expectations to pupils and give excellent support to those who find some topics difficult.
- Teachers track individual pupils' progress in their development of general skills well, but have yet to monitor clearly enough how well pupils' specific historical skills are developing.
- The use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' understanding of topics and enhance their presentations to the class is excellent, and pupils are often asked to show their thinking on the interactive whiteboards.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the history curriculum is outstanding.

- The school has developed an excellent creative curriculum where history falls within a general suite of topics. There is a very clear rolling programme of history topics through the year. The curriculum successfully retains a very tight focus on history within the wider thematic curriculum.
- There is excellent emphasis on developing pupils' history skills. 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.

- The school organises a good range of visits to places of historical interest locally and pupils say that they enjoy listening to visitors and theatre groups who regularly undertake talks and re-enactments to deepen pupils' understanding of the topics that they are studying. Pupils said that they particularly enjoyed the talk by an Egyptologist on mummification. This is followed up well with a visit to the British Museum to find out more about Egypt.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

Leadership and management of history are outstanding.

- The subject coordinator has built very well on previous good practice.
- The school has an excellent grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of history. The annual subject reviews are rigorous and accurately identify issues for development and improvement. These subject reviews lead to excellent action plans identifying, for example, how teaching and learning can improve further.
- Classroom monitoring of teaching is excellent and is supported by regular work reviews and discussions with pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding the tracking and evaluation of specific history skills in all classes.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector