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Mr R Peach  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Peach

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: history**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 13 June 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 attendance at an assembly. History was not being taught on the day of the visit but a learning walk was taken covering all classes.

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- Attainment in history is average and pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of different periods. For example, older pupils can describe and explain confidently and accurately aspects of life in Victorian Times.
- Pupils enjoy taking on enquiries in history. They particularly like being asked at the start of a topic what they know and what they would like to find out. This approach engages the pupils directly in the work and, as they say, it helps to make the subject more interesting.
- Pupils could identify similarities and differences between pictures of houses from different periods. However, the complete range of historical skills is not being developed fully. For example, pupils struggled to explain

how evidence might be checked for accuracy or how history can be interpreted in different ways.

- The contribution of history to pupils' personal development is good. They are well motivated in their learning and say that history is fun. They are aware that it is important to learn about the past so that it helps us, in the words of one Year 5 pupil, 'to recognise why the world has developed as it has'.

### **Quality of teaching in history**

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- Although no teaching was observed, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of work revealed that the work they are required to do is generally challenging and that it is amended to meet particular needs.
- Teachers are keen to motivate and engage pupils, and displays celebrate pupils' achievements and the range of activities adopted.
- Pupils' work is marked; comments are helpful and teachers give praise. However, the comments do not always give sufficient subject-specific advice on how pupils can improve their work.
- Strategies to assess pupils' work against National Curriculum levels of attainment are in their infancy and teachers' use of assessment to promote learning is not yet developed sufficiently. Furthermore, planning for progression in subject-specific skills is underdeveloped. As a result, teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of how well pupils are developing the full range of subject-specific skills.

### **Quality of the curriculum in history**

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets requirements. An appropriate cycle is in place and pupils explore a suitable range of history topics each year.
- The curriculum is in the process of being revised to make it more creative. Teachers recognise the importance of ensuring that the subject retains its identity and integrity within the emerging curriculum framework.
- Literacy is developed well in all year groups in history and opportunities are regularly taken to link with other subjects, such as art.
- Visits to places of historical interest are undertaken, such as Saltburn and the Head of Steam Museum in Darlington. Pupils enjoy these experiences because, as they say, they help 'bring the subject to life'. However, overall, the use of visits and visitors is underdeveloped.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in history**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is satisfactory.

- The coordinator leads the subject with skill and she is well supported by other teachers, all of whom work well as a team.
- The subject is organised well, planning is thorough and resources available in this small school are used wisely.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the coordinator is developing a clear picture of strengths and areas for development. However, there is no subject-specific action plan and no formal annual reporting procedures on progress towards implementing developments in the subject.
- Professional subject-specific training for teachers in history has been limited. Although links with two local primary schools are being used to update the curriculum in history, such collaboration has not yet been exploited to update teachers' knowledge and understanding of some of the more recent developments in the subject.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- ensuring that there is an explicit and well-defined approach to progression in the full range of historical skills to raise standards and enable teachers to plan for progression more rigorously
- developing assessment practice to ensure that:
  - pupils are given precise subject-specific advice on how they can improve their work
  - teachers and pupils have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are doing
- strengthening current systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of history across the school by:
  - creating a discreet subject-specific action plan
  - ensuring progress towards implementing the plan is measured annually
- making further use of local networks and clusters to ensure that staff update their knowledge and understanding in the subject through relevant professional development.

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

**Michael Maddison**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**