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Mr T Harman  
Headteacher  
Grade-Ruan CofE School  
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Dear Mr Harman

### **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 May 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

#### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- All pupils make good progress and standards of attainment are above average.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of features of life in different historical periods. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 can explain confidently and knowledgeably about life in Anglo-Saxon England. They demonstrated good understanding of the ceremony and rites of Anglo-Saxon burials and how we can begin to piece together evidence and make inferences about people's daily lives from such studies.
- Chronological understanding is also developing well across the school, especially, within each individual enquiry. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, regular opportunities to explore similarities and differences between past and present ensure an excellent foundation for later work in history.

However, some older pupils are less secure when trying to accurately sequence different historical periods across a larger expanse of time.

- Pupils are developing good enquiry skills and use these to draw inferences from a range of evidence and make reasoned conclusions about the past. However, pupils' understanding of historical interpretations and their skills of assessing the usefulness of historical evidence are less secure.
- History makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and their attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They enjoy the subject very much; 'we get to learn fascinating things', one said. Pupils particularly enjoy finding out about the past for themselves, posing their own questions, discussing their ideas and finding out about their local area.

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

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers and pupils share a great enthusiasm for the subject. Learning activities are planned well to meet the needs of all pupils through a variety of challenging and engaging tasks. The school recognises that there is potential to stretch and challenge the small number of high ability pupils.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because of detailed and thoughtful planning and good dialogue between teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, these pupils make similar progress to their peers.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils should learn by the end of the lesson. However, learning goals and written comments in books are not always sufficiently focused on assessing historical skills and providing pupils with sharp pointers for making better progress.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning. For example, in one lesson, pupils' understanding of the lives of people in Britain at the turn of the 19th century was significantly enhanced by carefully selected audio-visual clips and digital imagery.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The school has implemented a two-year rolling programme of history topics which incorporates a whole-school approach to the development of a creative curriculum. This approach is supported by well-planned cross-curricular and cross-phase links which are enabling pupils to develop their knowledge well and make increasingly sophisticated connections between themes and subjects.
- The use of local history is a strong feature of the school's curriculum and is used to develop meaningful learning opportunities drawn from pupils' own interests, topical issues and the rich local environment. Pupils appreciate opportunities to enhance their learning through extra-curricular visits to local places of interest.

- Teachers are supported well by detailed planning and good teaching resources and ideas. However, the opportunities for teachers to attend and/or access history-specific training and development are limited.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject leader has a clear commitment to the importance of history in the primary curriculum.
- Although only in role since September 2010, the subject leader has demonstrated good capacity to develop the subject more widely. Her effective self-evaluation results in a good understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development.
- The subject leader has recently set out expected levels of progression in pupils' understanding of key historical concepts and processes. Consequently, teachers are now beginning to plan and assess more rigorously for the development of pupils' progress in these wider historical skills. However, there has been insufficient time to see the full impact of this work and the school is focusing on embedding these changes.

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

- ensuring that pupils' wider historical skills are more coherently and consistently developed across the school by:
  - embedding and making explicit the recently defined approach to planning for progression in pupils' understanding of these skills
  - ensuring that pupils' progress in the development of historical skills are monitored and evaluated more rigorously
  - ensuring that assessment opportunities provide pupils with sharp pointers on how to improve their work 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 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

**Karl Sampson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**