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Mrs V Burrows
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Dear Mrs Burrows

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 26 June to look at work in history.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of history, the visit had a particular focus on information and communication technology (ICT).

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with you, discussions with pupils and other staff, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of two lessons. Your relatively small school of 58 pupils has undergone a period of instability in staffing. The co-ordinator for history took up her responsibilities in September 2006 and two out of the three teachers have been appointed from the start of this academic year.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory, although standards are below the expectations for pupils' ages. This reflects the underachievement that has occurred in the past.

- In lessons, pupils make good progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding.
- Younger pupils know how seaside holidays have differed over the years and they are developing well their understanding of chronology. They can tell the difference between 'long ago' and 'now' and most can place a series of photographs in chronological order.
- Older pupils are developing well their knowledge and understanding of poverty in the Tudor period. They can interpret primary and secondary sources but their understanding of the reliability of such sources is limited.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are excellent.

Quality of teaching and learning

A scrutiny of pupils' work over time and discussion with pupils show that teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, the teaching and learning are improving and they were good in the two lessons observed.

- The teaching observed was well planned and addressed the needs of the various abilities of the pupils. The planning took into account their prior attainment.
- Relationships are good. Pupils respond well to the questioning by the adults. Many are keen to ask and answer questions in whole-class discussions.
- Teachers have appropriately high expectations and these are reflected in the challenging activities set for the pupils.
- Activities are well timed and pace is injected to the learning through regular whole-class teaching points.
- The good teaching observed is beginning to address the legacy of underachievement that has existed in the learning of history.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The planning is generally satisfactory and meets requirements. However, it is over-dependent on literal interpretation of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority schemes of work.
- The planning takes into account the particular needs of mixed-age classes. One class, for example, has three year groups within it.
- Although overall curriculum planning is satisfactory, continuity and progression are not always apparent in the pupils' work over time. This is because there has been inadequate monitoring and evaluation in the past.

- Pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding of various topics soundly but the development of their full range of historical skills is not yet properly encouraged.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The history co-ordinator also co-ordinates literacy, geography, French, and has responsibilities for school visits and initial teacher education. This limits the time available for history.
- The co-ordinator took up responsibilities for history at the start of this academic year. This, together with the appointment of a new teacher in September 2006 and another at Easter 2007, has meant that improvements are occurring gradually.
- A good policy on history has been drawn up and there is an action plan with appropriate priorities. Adequate guidance and direction have been issued to all staff.

Subject issue: ICT

There is good use of ICT in history lessons and pupils are developing these skills soundly. Staff use interactive whiteboards competently and encourage pupils to use them as well. Pupils regularly use computers in their learning and younger pupils have good basic skills in, for example, using the keyboard and mouse. The older pupils can access and interrogate competently relevant websites, for instance about the treatment of poor people in Tudor times.

Inclusion

Approaches to inclusion are satisfactory.

The full range of needs is planned for in the teaching and learning. The lower attainers have been carefully identified by the teachers and their needs are met through intensive adult support, especially from the teaching assistants. As a result, pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Higher attaining pupils are set appropriate extension work in lessons, and their knowledge and understanding are extended through more in-depth questioning by the staff.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included the need to:

- planning for greater curriculum continuity and progression across all ages
- developing pupils' historical skills more rigorously
- monitoring and evaluating provision in history more rigorously.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

Champak Chauhan
Her Majesty's Inspector