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Mrs J Green  
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Dear Mrs Green

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 November 2009 to look at work in history.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the contribution of history to community cohesion and the development of independent learning 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils reach good standards in hypothesising, questioning and investigating skills which will later be valuable when studying history. In Years 1 to 4, standards are average and pupils make good progress. Year 4's presentation on the Tudors, at an assembly, indicated good knowledge as well as examples of considerable perception about political and personal relationships. Older pupils' written work is of a satisfactory standard but recent innovations in teaching are now beginning to raise its quality. As a result, pupils are now making good progress. An example of this was an outstanding Year 6 lesson when

pupils researched the consequences of selected events in books and on laptops and then recorded their evaluated findings accurately.

- Pupils' personal development is good. This is apparent even at an early age. For example, a Year 1 project on the study of old and new toys involved children asking questions to elicit information. They talked to parents and grandparents and developed their understanding of changes to their family's life. Pupils also hold strong moral viewpoints. This was most clear in discussions on Henry VIII's behaviour, particularly towards Catherine of Aragon.

#### Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching is good.

- In all years, teaching ensures that pupils are making good progress. Much teaching is imaginative, resulting in pupils being able to express strong opinions which are well supported by evidence. In discussion, there was insightful debate amongst younger pupils about whether both Guy Fawkes and King James were bad men and how the differences between them could be resolved. Resources are used well to support teaching. Teachers have a good idea of how well pupils are doing, although there is currently no formal assessment. The development plan makes clear that this will be introduced next year. The school has recently introduced new-style reporting to parents which includes a section on how well pupils are achieving in history.

#### Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum in history is currently based on a range of topics, such as 'Excavating the Egyptians' and 'Blitzed Brits'. It is successful in developing historical knowledge, understanding and skills and also supports literacy which was identified as a key area for development in the previous Ofsted report on the school. It lacks chronology, something which the school has already identified as an issue. The development plan indicates that this will be reviewed next year in line with the school's intention to make the curriculum more relevant to pupils in preparation for their future. The school makes extensive use of external resources, for example, the recent visit to Hampton Court, the toy workshop run by Chertsey Museum, and the use of Brookwood village.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- You and your senior leadership team set high expectations for the subject. The most notable evidence of this is to be found in the improvements in teachers' planning. The quality of self-evaluation is outstanding. Senior leaders monitor performance in the subject well and there is openness to

explore and innovate. This has been a major factor in securing improvements in pupils' progress.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is good.

- Reference has already been made to the use of Brookwood as a historical resource. A very good example of this was the school's centenary celebrations which involved pupils, past pupils, people from the village, parents and grandparents in a range of historical activities focused on the role of the school in the local community through time. A link with a school in Gambia is leading to shared study of a day in the life of pupils in both schools with a focus on changes over time.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- It is a principal feature of learning in the subject. There are many examples of this in all year groups. Two examples were the identification by pupils of brickwork at Hampton Court and their later creation, on their own initiative, of paintings, drawings and prints of different patterns in brick. Another example initiated by pupils involved linking history with drama and literacy by using rhyme to describe how news of the Great Fire of London spread.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introducing more formal assessment in history
- developing the curriculum to make it more relevant to pupils.

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

Paul Armitage  
Additional Inspector