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Mrs M Barnett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Barnett

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 23 February 2010 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 included interviews with you, staff and pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of one lesson.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils' learning and progress are good, and they attain average standards. Pupils of all ages acquire historical knowledge and understanding well. Older pupils have a good appreciation of aspects of life in Tudor times, while those in Years 3 and 4 are developing a good understanding of life in Ancient Egypt. Higher attaining pupils write extensively and for different audiences and purposes. Pupils of all ages and abilities have good speaking and listening skills.

- Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are well developed. They can use computers competently for research and other purposes.
- Some pupils can soundly evaluate historical sources and make reasonable deductions about their reliability. However, pupils' historical skills are not as well developed as their knowledge and understanding.
- Relationships are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they enjoy learning history.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Lessons are planned carefully so that they build on pupils' prior learning. Learning objectives are routinely identified and shared with pupils. Such objectives are tailored carefully for the different abilities in the class.
- Learning activities are organised and managed extremely well. Pupils work constructively in groups. Resources are used efficiently and support staff are deployed effectively to meet the needs of different pupils.
- Time is used efficiently and learning is well paced. Pupils are given good levels of challenge to enable them to make good progress.
- Pupils are given good oral feedback in lessons. In addition, their work is marked regularly. However, marking is not sufficiently evaluative and does not always indicate to pupils how they could improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad and meets requirements. The overall two-year planning cycle for the mixed-age classes is coherent.
- Pupils are offered a varied range of topics to study and they value this. The topics are supplemented well by the good and regular use of ICT.
- The school is reviewing its curriculum and aims to overhaul its planning for 2011. The school intends to revise the current history study units as part of this process.
- Pupils' learning experiences are enhanced by visits to places of historical interest and by the use of visitors. They visit Sulgrave Manor and Holdenby House, and the school has fostered good links with local museums. Visitors also come to the school to talk about their experiences, for example about the Second World War, and pupils value these.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject leader maintains good oversight of the subject despite having other responsibilities in this small school. She has driven forward curriculum planning and has monitored the progress of individual pupils across the school. There are plans to extend such monitoring.
- You and the subject leader evaluate the provision in history well. Together, you have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in history across the school. Appropriate priorities for further action have been identified.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is satisfactory.

- The school has strong links with its local community. Good links exist with local churches and businesses, including a farm.
- Pupils' global understanding is developing gradually through emerging links with Belarus, Kenya and India.
- However, pupils' understanding of life in a culturally diverse society through the study of history is limited. The school has plans to tackle this.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Pupils are confident and competent learners. They work well together in small groups and individually. They can work for sustained periods with little adult supervision.
- Pupils are regularly set research tasks where they have to use ICT. They work on these conscientiously and some, especially the higher attainers, undertake independent research at home.
- Pupils can use a good range of other resources, including textbooks and worksheets, competently.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to plan their own learning. They can ask relevant questions and can pose problems to solve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- extending pupils' historical skills through the use and interpretation of a wider range of historical sources, evaluating the reliability of such sources, and developing pupils' chronological understanding
- ensuring that the marking of pupils' work includes regular target-setting in history so that they know how to improve their work.

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

As I explained previously, 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
Additional Inspector