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Mr D Butterfield
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Butterfield

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 April 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 information and communication technology (ICT) in history and on provision for gifted and talented history pupils.

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 staff and pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be **outstanding**.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is **outstanding** and standards are well above average.

- Pupils enjoy history and they make outstanding progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding, and in their writing skills. They talk confidently about the topics they are studying.
- Pupils in Year 2, for example, know a great deal about the Great Fire of London. Those in Year 4 have an excellent knowledge of the Vikings, and pupils in Year 6 can talk accurately and fluently about their work on the Tudors.
- Pupils are developing first-rate research skills and they use historical terms accurately. Their chronological understanding is particularly well developed and they have a good understanding of change and

continuity. However, their wider historical skills, such as interpretation, are not as well developed.

- History makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are well motivated and are enthusiastic about their learning. They work well together or on their own, behave impeccably, and take immense pride in their work. They say they enjoy history because it is 'fun' and because 'it helps us to understand our world'.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **outstanding**.

- Teachers enjoy teaching history. They plan thoroughly and use a range of creative strategies and activities to stimulate pupils' interest. They have high expectations and pupils are eager to do well and learn more.
- Learning is well matched to pupils' needs. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in their work through specific tasks and, when required, with adult assistance. As a result, they are able to contribute fully to class and group discussions.
- Higher attaining pupils are challenged well, are given precise tasks and they make outstanding progress, as seen in a Year 4 lesson on the outbreak of the Second World War.
- Marking is thorough and pupils are given general and subject-specific feedback on how to improve their work. Teachers often set pupils a question as part of the feedback and this helps to deepen their historical understanding.
- Pupils' progress in history is assessed and recorded. However, formal assessment practice tends to focus on the assessment of knowledge and recall, and does not give sufficient emphasis to all aspects of the work pupils undertake in history. The school is aware that assessment practice needs refining to improve the monitoring of pupils' progress.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is **outstanding**.

- The history curriculum is broad, balanced and meets requirements. The school is currently reviewing some of the historical topics taught and is keen to ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests.
- Cross-curricular links are well planned and they are clearly highlighted in the schemes of work. Pupils' literacy is well developed in history in all year groups. Opportunities are also taken to link with other subjects, for example with art, drama, and design and technology.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits to places of historical interest and by the use of visitors. Learning outside the classroom is organised for each year group. Pupils say how much they enjoy these activities and how they help to make their learning more interesting. Pupils are well prepared before they go on a visit and follow-up work shows that the visits have a significant impact on pupils' achievement, as seen in the accounts written by Year 2 pupils after their visit to the RAF Museum.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are **outstanding**.

- The coordinator, who also has responsibility for geography, undertakes her role effectively and efficiently. She is well organised, enthusiastic and keen to see the subject develop for all pupils. Her hard work, commitment, and guidance on teaching in history are much appreciated by her colleagues.
- Planning is thorough, schemes of work are clear and supportive, and action plans have appropriate priorities. Record keeping is meticulous.
- Through her monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of history in the school, the coordinator is developing a clear picture of the strengths of the subject and the areas that need further development. For example, the school is aware that formal assessment in history is underdeveloped.

Subject issue: information and communication technology (ICT)

The use of ICT in history is **outstanding**.

- Teachers use ICT regularly and effectively to engage pupils and to reinforce learning.
- Pupils have excellent access to computers, both in the ICT suite and in classrooms. They are confident users of computers and their work is well structured and guided. For example, as part of group work about the Second World War, pupils in Year 4 were observed using the portable laptops well to investigate the leaders of the major participating countries.
- Opportunities are regularly taken for pupils to use ICT in lessons, not just for research, but also to word process their own work and to produce their own assignments. Older pupils, for example, have the opportunity to make short films about Greek theatre and subsequently to edit them and to add titles and music.
- Pupils enjoy using the computers and they say how it adds variety to their learning.

Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented history pupils

At present, one pupil is identified as being gifted in history. However, the school is aware of those pupils who show particular strengths in the subject and excellent provision is made for them in lessons, for example through research and computer-based activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing assessment practice so that it includes all aspects of pupils' work in history.

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

Michael Maddison
Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted's Specialist Adviser for History