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Mrs S Warren  
Headteacher  
The Oaks Primary School  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Mrs Warren

### **Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: history**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 28 May 2012 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. A learning walk was also undertaken to look at displays and visit the classes not otherwise observed.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

#### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- Attainment in history is above average and by the end of Year 6 pupils make good progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding. Younger pupils can describe in detail the work they had had undertaken on the Blitz in the Second World War. Older pupils are articulate and thoughtful and can explain with clarity their work on the Tudors.
- Pupils' chronological understanding is being developed well. They were able to sequence images of homes in the past and older pupils had a good understanding of the importance of interval and duration when talking about time.

- Pupils' understanding of the full range of historical skills, however, is underdeveloped. They were unsure about how evidence might be checked for accuracy and opportunities to ensure that they are aware that people experienced events in the past in different ways are not fully exploited.
- Pupils enjoy undertaking enquiries and their research logs provide clear evidence of their commitment and their enthusiasm for history. However, opportunities for them to develop their discursive writing skills are limited.
- The contribution of history to pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils are extremely well motivated and become engrossed in their learning. They are inquisitive and are encouraged to ask questions and discuss their thinking. Relationships are excellent and pupils work well on their own, in pairs and in small groups. To them history is 'exciting' and important because, in the words of one older pupil, 'we need to learn about why the present is like it is'.

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

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers enjoy teaching history and they use a range of activities to engage pupils and to stimulate their imagination and their creativity. This helps to explain the pupils' interest.
- A good ethos within the school promotes independent learning for all pupils. This philosophy is strongly embedded in the teachers' routine planning and in lessons.
- Pupils undertake a wide range of independent work in history. They research confidently using tablet computers and other information sources, they handle artefacts and make appropriate inferences, and they are very keen to talk with visitors.
- Learning is matched to meet the needs of all pupils. Questioning is good and successfully prompts pupils' thinking and probes their understanding.
- Pupils receive helpful feedback on their work. However, they are unsure how they can improve in history because the comments do not include sufficient subject-specific guidance.
- Senior leaders are aware that the new assessment procedures are not embedded. As a result, teachers do not yet have a thorough enough understanding of how well pupils are making progress and developing their subject-specific skills.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- Pupils explore a range of history topics each year and the school has worked hard to ensure that the identity and integrity of the subject are maintained in its evolving skills-based curriculum framework.
- Pupils are developing a good sense of period through this integrated approach, and local history is explored well across the school.

- Work in history makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' literary skills.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of activities designed to strengthen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the past. Pupils enjoy the visits they make to places of historical interest and the visitors who come into school. They note that these activities 'bring their learning to life'.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject leader and the curriculum leader are well focused and provide good support for their colleagues who work well as a team. Self-evaluation is accurate and the action plan notes appropriate priorities to secure further improvement.
- During this academic year the school has strengthened its approach to leadership and management in history and other foundation subjects. It is aware, though, that the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress in their subject-specific skills is underdeveloped.
- Professional subject-specific training for teachers in history is underdeveloped. Although links with neighbouring primary and secondary schools are in place, they have not yet been fully exploited to update teachers' knowledge and understanding of some of the more recent developments in the subject.

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

- ensuring that pupils' wider historical skills are thoroughly embedded across the school
- providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their discursive history writing skills
- developing written feedback to ensure that pupils are given precise subject-specific advice on how they can improve their work
- embedding the new assessment procedures to ensure that pupils' progress in the development of their historical knowledge and skills is assessed consistently and monitored and evaluated rigorously.

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

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Michael Maddison**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**