

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr A Warren
Headteacher
Mill Hill Primary School
Sunnyside Avenue
Tunstall
Stoke-on-Trent
ST6 6ED

Dear Mr Warren

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 14 October 2010 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 you, staff and pupils; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; an analysis of pupils' work; and the observation of two lessons. A singing session about the Romans by Year 5 pupils was observed and a learning walk was undertaken through the Foundation Stage.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- From relatively low starting points, pupils make good progress and attain standards that are broadly appropriate for their ages. They develop good knowledge and understanding about key events, for example about life in Ancient Greece.
- Pupils' enquiry skills are well developed. They work well with a good range of historical evidence and can ask appropriate questions. They can discuss sensitive topics, for instance the Holocaust, well.
- Pupils' chronological understanding is developing well. Most in Year 6, for example, have a good understanding of the key events regarding the outbreak of the Second World War.

- Most pupils are fascinated by studying the past and they thoroughly enjoy their learning. They can undertake independent research well.
- Pupils are well-motivated learners and work in a mature manner. They maintain their concentration on the tasks set, and work well with each other and with adults. Their attitudes and behaviour are outstanding.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teaching and learning are well planned and they enable pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils are given a good range of learning experiences, including analysing written texts, evaluating different types of evidence and making historical deductions.
- Teachers use a good range of resources. This includes the interactive whiteboard, handouts, history textbooks and works of fiction. Pupils regularly use information and communication technology for further research.
- Time is used efficiently and there is a brisk pace to the learning. Teachers question the class well at the start of the lesson to recap work already covered. Activities are suitable for pupils' different abilities. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in lessons by the adults and they make good progress.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and pupils find written comments useful. However, the marking in pupils' books is not always evaluative and targets for improvement are not routinely set.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is outstanding.

- The school's curriculum is organised around a cross-curricular approach which focuses on creative approaches to learning.
- The study of history is an integral part of this and relevant study units are covered at all ages. Pupils' learning is significantly enhanced through the high-quality learning experiences and the strong development of their creativity. There is a strong focus on learning by doing and pupils, for example, re-enact battles, build Anderson shelters and listen to, and interview, relevant people. For example, one visitor recently came to talk to children about her experiences as a child during the Second World War.
- Planning takes place across year groups and careful monitoring ensures that all requirements are met. The development of pupils' literacy skills plays a significant role in the teaching and learning of history.
- Pupils' learning is significantly enhanced through visits to a wide range of historical places. These include regular visits to Rhyll, Conway Castle, Trentham Gardens and Shugborough Hall. In addition, visitors regularly come to school to talk about the past, including staff from the local

museums' service. All these activities are memorable for the pupils and they value them highly.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- The deputy headteachers and the subject leader have a good overview of the curriculum. They have a good and accurate knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Expectations for improvement are high.
- Such awareness has been created through a comprehensive programme of checking of the school's work, undertaken mostly by senior leaders.
- The subject leader gains an awareness of provision and outcomes in history largely through a scrutiny of pupils' work, reviewing planning and ordering resources. She is not yet involved in formal lesson observations, although plans are in place to do so.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of marking and target-setting in history, and ensuring that these are evaluated regularly
- ensuring that the subject leader is enabled to strengthen her role in evaluating history across the school.

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

As I 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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Champak Chauhan
Additional Inspector