

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



10 March 2011

Mrs S Muscroft
Headteacher
St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior,
Infant and Early Years School
Fieldhead Lane
Birstall
WF17 9HN

Dear Mrs Muscroft

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 1 March 2011 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.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils enter the Nursery with skills in knowledge and understanding of the world which are generally below age-related expectations. They make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and reach average attainment when they enter Key Stage 1. This good progress continues across the school and standards in history are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils acquire discrete historical skills at a good rate in all key stages. In Nursery and Reception, for example, they develop chronological skills by examining photographs of themselves and their families and discussing their birthdays and what they did yesterday. In Year 2, they evaluate the purpose of furniture found in Tutankhamun's tomb with confidence. By Year 6, they are fully aware of what makes a balanced argument and also

of the nature of bias in history. Moreover, they give many examples of how photographs can lie.

- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Many say that history is their favourite subject and that they pursue voluntary research at home. Their behaviour and engagement in lessons are exceptionally good and they collaborate willingly with each other in pairs and groups.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Planning is good and links lesson content to pupils' acquisition of historical skills. Information and communication technology is used well as a teaching, learning and motivational tool.
- Lessons often develop as a dialogue between teachers and pupils. Pupils also have many opportunities to work independently, for example when evaluating the evils of Apartheid or when relating the Aztec civilisation to other periods in history.
- In the best lessons, an outstanding Year 2 session on Ancient Egypt for example, pace is rapid, challenge is relentless and there is also a major focus on developing pupils' skills in literacy. As a result, pupils understand and use key historical register with an accuracy which belies their years.
- Assessment is satisfactory overall but the monitoring of children's progress in Nursery and Reception is outstanding and gives teachers an accurate awareness of children's achievement. The school recognises that the developing curriculum demands an ongoing modification of assessment practice, to ensure that less experienced staff and also non-specialists can identify with increasing accuracy how well their pupils are performing. Teachers are also aware that written information on the skills that pupils are acquiring is not detailed enough to ensure that parents and carers are fully aware of the progress which is being made.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are cared for and guided well by the talented and committed team of teaching assistants, some of whom also spend time challenging more able pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The school is developing a themed curriculum, but history has a high profile within it. Questionnaires completed by pupils, parents and carers demonstrate that the subject is now much more enjoyable and that pupils are more enthusiastic about it.
- Curricular planning places an important focus on pupils' independent learning and on their acquisition of skills in analysis, evaluation and the questioning of evidence. As pupils themselves say, 'We look at different sources, weigh them up and come to our own conclusions.'

- Historical study, on the 'Swinging Sixties' for example, is also emphasised in assemblies and, because the school population is primarily White British, teachers celebrate, for example, Black History and place emphasis on the study of the slave trade and also of Apartheid. A good programme of enrichment activities includes themed days and extra-curricular visits.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- The relatively new subject coordinator is supported most effectively by senior leaders and, as a result, already has an accurate understanding of how well the subject is delivered and what is needed to ensure ongoing improvement. She recognises, for example, that ongoing development of assessment in history is of the essence as the curriculum continues to develop.
- The monitoring of teaching quality is regular and detailed scrutiny of pupils' work is an important element in subject self-evaluation. Support for less experienced staff is good and collaborative planning ensures that good practice is shared across the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to modify assessment in history in the light of the developing curriculum, ensuring that non-specialists and less experienced staff are fully aware of the progress their pupils are making
- giving pupils and their parents and carers more written information about the historical skills they are developing in each topic, in order to foster their understanding of how well they are doing.

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

Jim Kidd
Additional Inspector