

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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Miss C Piombo
Headteacher
Riverside Primary School
302a Merton Road
London
SW18 5JP

Dear Miss Piombo

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 20 June 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.

- From their varied starting points, pupils make good progress in history so that their attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average.
- Pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of topics studied in depth. Their good sense of period is deepened through valuable and well-coordinated opportunities for cross-curricular working.
- Older pupils have a good understanding of how different periods of history fit together. Less secure is their understanding of the time differences between different periods and events in history. As a result, their mental map of the past is sometimes a little confused.
- Pupils' skills in historical enquiry are good. They benefit from opportunities to ask their own questions about the past and to reflect on what they have learnt, for example, in their studies of Ancient Egypt or the Tudors.

- History makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils report that they enjoy history very much, and appreciate the excellent provision for enrichment. Pupils behave well in lessons and work very effectively in groups. Sometimes, when the introductory sessions led by the teacher go on for too long, pupils' attention begins to wane and they become less attentive.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers' enthusiasm for history is reflected in high levels of pupils' enjoyment in lessons. Good opportunities are provided to develop pupils' skills as independent and collaborative learners.
- Teachers use their good understanding of pupils' prior attainment in literacy to plan learning activities which generally meet the needs and abilities of different pupils well. Effective use is made of additional staff to support and challenge those who need additional help.
- While lessons are often characterised by the use of well-conceived and challenging enquiry questions, learning materials are not always sufficiently well designed to secure the high-quality thinking the teaching is trying to encourage. In other lessons, opportunities are sometimes missed to pose challenging and controversial questions to stimulate argument and debate.
- Teachers' marking is completed regularly and conscientiously. However, it is not fully effective in helping teachers and pupils to identify precisely how well pupils are doing in the development of their subject-specific skills or how to improve in history.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is enriched by an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities. Pupils benefit from wide-ranging opportunities to visit places of historical interest and importance, including Hampton Court Palace, the Britain at War Museum and the British Museum. Visits are timed to coincide extremely well with pupils' study of the past.
- Good links have been forged with the Wandsworth Museum to build pupils' enjoyment and understanding in history. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils enjoyed playing with Tudor and Victorian toys provided by the museum as they considered how toys have changed over time.
- The curriculum is enhanced by high-quality cross-curricular links, particularly in literacy and art and design. For example, pupils' understanding of Aztec beliefs and customs is enhanced very significantly through their work to design authentic Aztec clay bowls.
- Planning for progression in historical knowledge, understanding and skills is underdeveloped. This inhibits teachers' and pupils' understanding of how pupils might be expected to make progress over time in history.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject is well led by a committed team of staff who are using their growing expertise well to strengthen provision in history, for example through sharing lesson ideas with other teachers.
- Leaders and managers have correctly identified that planning for progression in history is not sufficiently well developed. They are currently designing a curriculum map which will strengthen teachers' understanding of progression in the development of pupils' subject-specific skills.
- Systems to monitor pupils' attainment have been revised since September to improve teachers' understanding of how well pupils are doing in history. Plans are in place to strengthen these further for September to ensure that the school's understanding of pupils' attainment in history is more robust.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthen planning for pupil progression in the development of subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding in history, to ensure that:
 - teachers and pupils are able to articulate clearly what pupils need to do to make progress in history
 - marking and assessment are focused sharply on the development of history-specific knowledge, skills and understanding
 - all staff, including leaders and managers, have a clear understanding of how well pupils are attaining in history, in lessons and over time.

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

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector