

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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Mrs H Richardson
Headteacher
Parson Cross CE Primary School
Halifax Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S6 1LB

Dear Mrs Richardson

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 1 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 in the school and to visit the classes not otherwise observed.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- By the end of Year 6, pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. Whereas younger pupils talked enthusiastically and accurately about the life and work of Grace Darling, older pupils explained confidently and knowledgeably about the impact of war on civilians during the Second World War.
- Pupils' chronological understanding is being developed well. Time lines are used effectively but some older pupils were unclear about the importance of interval and duration when trying to sequence images from different periods.
- Pupils' understanding of the full range of historical skills is underdeveloped. They can explain clearly why events occur and identify

consequences of those events. However, they are unsure, for example, how evidence might be checked for accuracy and how history can be interpreted in different ways.

- Pupils enjoy undertaking enquiries and the 'home learning' exercises help to strengthen their research skills. However, opportunities for them to develop their discursive writing skills are limited.
- The contribution of history to pupils' personal development is good. They are well motivated and eager to learn. They enjoy their lessons and say that 'history is exciting'. Older pupils are clear that history is important because, in the words of one pupil, 'we should know about how things have changed and why everything is like it is'.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Lessons are carefully planned and displays celebrate pupils' successes as well as the variety of activities adopted. The practice of beginning each unit with a dramatic hook, such as the Tudor banquet, motivates the pupils well and helps to spark their imagination as well as their interest.
- Older pupils particularly noted how much they enjoyed being asked at the start of a topic what they knew and what they wanted to know. They commented that this made their learning more interesting, as did the lessons which focused on practical activities such as handling Tudor costumes and other historical artefacts.
- 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 always include sufficient subject-specific references.
- The school is aware that assessing pupils' progress in developing subject-specific skills is underdeveloped. This is because current assessment procedures do not effectively help teachers identify which skills are developing well and which need to be worked on more.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils explore an appropriate range of topics in each key stage. However, opportunities for pupils to study local history topics are not fully exploited.
- Although the curriculum is being revised to create a themed approach towards teaching foundation subjects, the school is ensuring that history does not lose its identity and integrity in the evolving structure.
- A good range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum, strengthens pupils' knowledge and understanding and enhances their sense of period.

Pupils say how much they enjoy these activities, such as the visit to Weston Park Museum and the opportunities to interview veterans from the Second World War about their wartime experiences.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- Although only in role since the start of the current academic year, the subject leader has worked quickly to assess the effectiveness of history. Self-evaluation is accurate and the subject's action plan has appropriate objectives.
- The subject leader scrutinizes teachers' planning and pupils' work. However, the school is aware that the full monitoring and evaluation aspects of her role are underdeveloped.
- Subject-specific training for the subject leader and for all teachers in history has been limited. Links with neighbouring primary and secondary schools have not yet been exploited to update teachers' knowledge and understanding of some of the more recent developments in the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving pupils' attainment and accelerating their achievement by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their discursive history writing skills and especially in Years 5 and 6
 - ensuring that pupils' wider historical skills are thoroughly developed across the school and that their progress in the development of these skills is assessed consistently and monitored and evaluated rigorously
 - developing marking and written feedback to ensure that pupils are given precise subject-specific advice on how they can improve their work
 - making further use of local networks and clusters to ensure that staff update their knowledge and understanding in the subject through relevant professional development.

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