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Anne Etchells  
St Aidan's Voluntary-Controlled Primary School  
Albany Road  
London  
N4 4RR

Dear Anne

### **Subject inspection of St Aidan's Voluntary-Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 November 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. The findings do not change the overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding from the last section 5 inspection.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for a no formal designation inspection of schools. The inspection was carried out to enable Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to better understand the quality of education in specific subjects provided by outstanding primary schools.

### **Main findings**

You and your staff have made sure that the history curriculum reflects the subject content of the national curriculum. You ensure that all pupils have access to the full history curriculum, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Good links ensure that the Year 1 curriculum builds well on what children have learned in the Nursery class and in Reception.

Pupils clearly enjoy history. They can talk in some depth about the individual topics they have learned about, for example the Great Fire of London. Older pupils can locate the different periods they have learned about in chronological order. They are quick to refer to the timelines they have constructed, which set out how different periods of history are sequenced, from the Stone Age to the 20th century.

Pupils' learning is hampered, though, by some important weaknesses in the history curriculum. Leaders have not identified with enough precision the core content that

they want pupils to know and understand by the end of each topic and, cumulatively, over time. This leads to teachers' expectations being too low. Pupils are rarely asked to write about history in any depth. They have very few opportunities to construct responses to historically valid questions.

Curriculum planning lacks precision in setting out how pupils' disciplinary knowledge will be developed. Planning leaves too much to the discretion of individual teachers. For example, plans do not make clear how, precisely, teachers should develop pupils' understanding of concepts such as significance, causation, and continuity and change. Though pupils can put events in time order, their chronological understanding lacks depth. Pupils are not expected to identify similarities and differences, draw contrasts or analyse trends within and between different periods of history.

Teachers do their best to help pupils understand methods of historical enquiry. They draw well on resources from the local library service to help pupils develop their investigative skills. However, curriculum planning does not support teachers well enough in teaching this aspect of disciplinary knowledge. Too often teachers ask pupils to consider whether particular types of evidence are reliable or not, without such questions being grounded in a well-crafted historical enquiry. This leads to formulaic responses which lack depth and rigour. Planning also reveals a lack of clarity in leaders' understanding of the difference between methods of historical enquiry and the construction of historical interpretations.

You are keen to ensure that pupils' learning in history is strengthened. To that end, the school has decided to pilot a new history curriculum in Year 3 from the Spring term 2020. This curriculum has been devised by experienced and well-regarded teachers from the history teaching community.

## **Evidence**

I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the subject leader for history and other teachers. I visited lessons in Years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 and spoke to pupils from the Year 4 and Year 6 classes about their work in history. I also looked at these pupils' books. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including curriculum plans in history and records of visits to the school by the governor who is linked to history.

## **Context**

St Aidan's is a one-form entry primary school. The school's early years provision includes a nursery for three-year-olds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with SEND. This includes a higher proportion than average of pupils with education, health and care plans.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Haringey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton

**Her Majesty's Inspector**