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Miss Dawn Tilley
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Dear Miss Tilley

Subject inspection of St Francis Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 December, 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

Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning history. They like knowing facts about the topics they have learned. For example, pupils in key stage 1 knew that Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament because he wanted to kill the king. As they get older, pupils gain an understanding of aspects of life in different ancient civilisations. For example, when I visited, Year 6 were learning about the Mayan number system. Pupils learn much beyond the classroom too. They spoke excitedly about using the hill in the playground to understand why castles need to be high up, and of their visit to the local library to research the history of Chandler's Ford.

You make sure that children in the early years are well placed to learn about history when they begin Year 1 by ensuring that they become familiar with the concept of time passing. For example, they explore the changes in the seasons and learn about the different toys that their grandparents played with as children. The history

that pupils learn about in key stages 1 and 2 reflects the overall subject content of the national curriculum. You make sure that all pupils have access to the full history curriculum, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, some disadvantaged pupils are not learning or understanding the history they are being taught as well as other pupils. Leaders have secure plans in place to address this.

Teachers appreciate the opportunity to plan what they teach collaboratively with colleagues. They clearly enjoy what they teach and typically present information clearly, choosing activities which maintain pupils' interest well. Teachers check pupils' understanding through careful questioning. They often choose resources which help pupils to understand methods of historical enquiry. This includes using the local authority artefact collections to help pupils understand how historians investigate the past.

You recognise the relative strengths and areas to develop within the history curriculum. Your school improvement plan wisely sets out that leaders and teachers need to consider how teachers teach the aims of the national curriculum. Currently, your history plans do not set out how and when pupils learn about historical concepts such as cause and consequence, or how pupils build up their understanding of the different meanings of some key abstract terms such as 'empire'. By leaving the choice of which aspects to teach to the discretion of teachers, leaders cannot be certain that pupils' disciplinary knowledge is being developed well enough over time.

Leaders have not identified sharply enough the full content of what pupils should know and understand by the end of each topic, and over the time they are in school. As a result, sometimes the curriculum lacks challenge and pupils do not come into contact with more complicated historical ideas over time. Additionally, pupils do not often write about history in any depth and are seldom given the opportunity to apply their knowledge by constructing informed responses to historical questions. This limits pupils' ability to show how well they have understood the historical content they have been taught, and limits the validity of teachers' assessments of pupils' historical knowledge and understanding.

Sometimes, staff are not clear about the knowledge that pupils already have about different periods in time. As a result, teachers do not consistently encourage pupils to make valid connections between the different periods they study, or to gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts. For example, although by Year 6 pupils have learned about Mayan, Egyptian and Greek civilisations, they have not been given the opportunity to consider the similarities and differences between their social, religious or economic history.

Evidence

During this visit I met with you, other senior leaders, the subject leaders for history and a group of teachers. I visited lessons in the early years and key stage 2, and spoke to pupils in these classes about their learning in history. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 1 and another group from key stage 2. I evaluated work in pupils' books. I scrutinised curriculum planning.

Context

This is a larger-than-average primary school. It has two classes in each year group. Most pupils are White British. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is broadly average. The proportion who are disadvantaged is well below the national average. So too is the proportion of pupils with SEND. Most pupils join the school at the start of the early years and stay until the end of Year 6. Staffing at the school is stable.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector