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12 March 2020

Miss Patricia Coxhead
Headteacher
St Clement Danes CofE Primary School
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Dear Miss Coxhead

Subject inspection of St Clement Danes CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 March 2020, 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 make the most of the school's location in central London to provide pupils with rich experiences in learning history. Pupils visit a wide range of places of historical interest and importance, including the British Museum, the Victorian and Albert Museum, and Sir John Soane's Museum. Staff ensure pupils make the most of these opportunities by ensuring they link closely to the topics taught in the curriculum. Pupils also learn about the past through a range of celebrations and ceremonies which highlight the history of the school and immediate locality.

In key stage 1, pupils develop a rich knowledge of the periods they study, building on their learning in the Reception class about changes over time. Pupils learn about the Victorians by comparing Victorian toys to their own and by interrogating photographs of Victorian classrooms. Pupils know that not all children went to school and that some had to work in factories or as chimney sweeps, for example.

Pupils told me how they learned how strict teachers could be in Victorian schools when 'Mr Wilberforce' visited the school to recreate the Victorian classroom. Pupils in Year 1 demonstrate impressive knowledge of aspects of medieval life through their study of castles. They learn key vocabulary and write accurately about features such as armoury, barbican and barracks. Their learning and memory of what they have learned is enhanced by the animators they work with when they subsequently visit the Tower of London. Pupils write factually and in some depth about history. Year 2 pupils, for example, produce extended writing which explains the causes and impact of the Great Fire of London. They write about the importance of Samuel Pepys' diaries in helping historians find out about the Great Fire and other aspects life during the Restoration period.

Currently, the key stage 2 curriculum does not fully meet the requirements set out in the national curriculum for history. Pupils do not learn about a non-European society, such as early Islamic civilisation or Mayan civilisation, to provide the necessary contrast with British history from the same period of time. Although pupils have previously learned about Benin in West Africa as part of Black History Month, the subject leader for history judged that the taught content did not reflect the intentions of this aspect of the national curriculum well enough. She intends to include coverage of the Mayan civilisation to remedy this shortfall.

The work in pupils' books in key stage 2 shows that for many units of work expectations are high. In these units, pupils demonstrate their subject and disciplinary knowledge with considerable sophistication. For example, pupils' books in Year 4 show how they gain strong knowledge of the scope and importance of the Roman Empire, including its impact on Britain. Pupils write about the importance of the Battle of Watling Street and evaluate different representations of Boudicca. This helps them to understand that the past can be represented in different ways and for a range of purposes. This links well to pupils' later study of Tudor portraiture. Pupils' books also show extensive coverage of Ancient Greece, including an evaluation of the merits and limitations of democracy in Ancient Greece. In Year 5, pupils learn a great deal about the Shang dynasty. This work links well with their study of China in geography. Pupils learn about social hierarchies and write at length in response to questions such as, 'Why was the Shang dynasty so successful?' Pupils learn to question claims made by archaeologists, comparing different interpretations to inform their own judgements about this ancient civilisation.

Expectations for some units of work in key stage 2 are not always as high and pupils do not deploy their knowledge, or answer valid historical questions, with similar rigour. The subject leader knows that the increased precision in curriculum planning, introduced to help less experienced staff understand precisely what is expected and what pupils should achieve, now needs to be rolled out to the other classes.

Evidence

I met with you and the subject leader for history. I also met with a group of pupils and teachers. I looked at curriculum planning and the work in pupils' books. You gave me a brief tour of the school which included short visits to classrooms. There was no history teaching taking place during the inspection.

Context

The school has one class in each year. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and over half speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average though more pupils than average have an education, health and care plan. You became headteacher in September 2016, having previously been deputy headteacher and head of school.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector