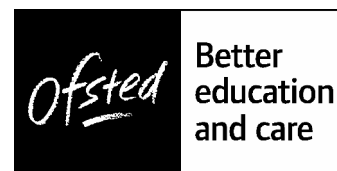


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28 September 2006

Mrs A McCullion
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McCullion

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 27 September to look at work in history.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on literacy.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with you and the history co-ordinator, discussions with pupils and staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be sound with good features.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding of history and achieve standards appropriate for their ages. In the Foundation Stage, pupils can ask pertinent questions and make inferences about objects from the past. Their understanding and appreciation of chronology are relatively weaker but they are gradually improving their awareness of the passing of time.

- Pupils in Year 1 and 2 are developing their knowledge of washdays from the past. They understand how, for example, washboards, dolly tubs, dolly pegs and flat irons were used and they can make comparisons with the present. They are not afraid to speculate about how everyday objects in the past were used.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are beginning to ask appropriate questions about Boudicca.
- Overall, pupils are making sound progress in their learning.

Pupils are interested in the subject and are keen to ask and answer questions. Their attitudes and behaviour are excellent.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

- The quality of teaching and learning was at least sound, with one lesson judged good.
- Teachers plan their lessons in some detail and learning intentions are usually clear. A good range of artefacts is used to stimulate the pupils' interests and to enable them to ask appropriate historical questions. The good questioning skills of the teachers extend the pupils' historical knowledge and understanding.
- Lessons are characterised by good relationships and the regular use of praise by the adults. The activities planned are usually challenging and the pupils enjoy undertaking them. They work well in pairs and in small groups and maintain their concentration.
- Pupils are usually offered good oral feedback in lessons.
- Where there were relative weaknesses, learning support assistants were not always efficiently used. They sat for relatively lengthy periods and were not sufficiently engaged with the pupils that they were supporting. The pace to the learning sometimes suffered because time was not properly used by the teacher.

Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum is broad and well balanced. The school uses the schemes of work published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and tailors them to suit its requirements. It has developed an appropriate two-year rolling programme to meet the needs of the mixed-age classes.
- Pupils' experiences of history are extended through a local study on John Bunyan and by visits to local museums. The use of information and communication technology is actively promoted and used in history lessons.
- Pupils enjoy studying the past and some are keen to talk about it. They regularly receive oral and written feedback on their work. However, short-term targets are not routinely set to enable pupils to progress even more.

Leadership and management of history

- The history co-ordinator provides clear leadership and direction for the subject. Long-term planning is well balanced and supported generally well by the medium-term planning. There is a need, however, to strengthen work in developing the pupils' chronological understanding and in helping them to organise and communicate their ideas in history more effectively.
- The school does not yet have an action plan for the subject for the current academic year. You reported that this will be finalised soon.

Subject issue: literacy

Pupils are encouraged to develop their literacy skills well. They are developing their skills in empathetic writing, for example about Anne Frank and about children being evacuated from British cities during the last world war. The writing of poetry, for example about the impact of bombing during the Second World War, is also encouraged. These skills are supplemented by the use of word-processing by some pupils. Pupils are routinely encouraged to extend their speaking and listening skills in lessons.

Inclusion

Pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties are well known to the staff and appropriate targets are identified for them. These targets tend to be in the development of their basic skills and, for example, behaviour. Identified pupils are given additional adult support to enable them to make appropriate progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that learning support assistants are used more efficiently in lessons
- strengthen assessment procedures so that there are more periodic targets for improvement for all pupils which are properly recorded and shared with them.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Champak Chauhan
Her Majesty's Inspector