

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Golden
Headteacher
Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
Daiglen Drive
South Ockendon
Essex
RM15 5RP

Dear Mrs Golden

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during the visit I made on 15 March 2007 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. 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history in your school was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in history are just above average and achievement in both key stages is good.

- Pupils of all abilities and ages achieve well in several aspects of their historical learning. Year 6 pupils make good progress in historical enquiry and enjoy researching topics and then communicating their findings to the class. Younger pupils show a keen sense of historical curiosity and particularly enjoy lessons where they handle historical artefacts and put them in chronological order.
- Progress in extended writing is good. The school has worked very successfully to raise standards in writing across the curriculum and the

strategies put into place have had a positive impact on pupils' achievements in history. Pupils enjoy writing at length and become more confident writers as they move through the school. Reading skills, however, are weaker than writing skills.

- Pupils do not always take enough care with the presentation of their work.
- All pupils show a good recall of earlier work and Year 6 learners are well prepared for work at Key Stage 3.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The evidence indicates that teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was criticised for being over-reliant on worksheets.
- Pupils enjoy their history lessons because they say they are exciting with lots of interesting activities. During discussions, a younger pupil described with great enthusiasm a lesson when 'Florence Nightingale' had visited the school so that they could ask her 'lots of questions'. An older pupil said that he had just experienced the 'best history lesson ever' because it included 'really difficult' research, drama and sharing ideas.
- Teachers make good use of resources such as visitors, artefacts and information technology to prompt questions and investigative work. Displays of pupils' work and other materials, such as a timeline, are used well to enhance the quality of pupils' learning.
- Marking is regular and helpful, providing a useful basis for teachers' planning of future work linked to pupils' needs.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The scheme of work is clear. One weakness is the absence of any real study of local history.
- The curriculum is enhanced by events such as regular history assemblies, a good range of visitors and visits, and by participation in initiatives such as Young Archaeologist of the Year and the Mardyke Valley Community Heritage Trail.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were judged to be inadequate.

- The recently-appointed co-ordinator has made a very good start to her work. Teaching and learning have improved. Schemes of work and other documentation are fully in place, resources have been catalogued and gaps filled.
- Regular monitoring of pupils' books combined with discussions with pupils about what they know and can do in history has resulted in better teaching and improved standards and progress.
- To support continuing professional development, links with other coordinators in local schools could be very helpful.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- Teaching assistants work well with pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as those with English as an additional language. As a consequence, they achieve well. In one lesson seen, for example, an assistant used good questioning skills to encourage a small group of pupils to think about whether a phone with a dial was older than a touch-tone phone. More able pupils enjoy a good range of opportunities to carry out independent research such as finding out about Elizabethan chalk pit workers.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- improve the presentation of pupils' work
- provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their reading skills in history
- consider developing a unit of work on local history.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in your 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn Bappa
Additional Inspector