

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs Brown
Headteacher
Boughton Primary School
Moulton Lane
Boughton
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN2 8RG

Dear Mrs Brown

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 19 June to look at work in history.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of history, the visit had a particular focus on information and communication technology (ICT).

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, the curriculum leader, discussions with pupils and other staff, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of five lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Standards in history are high and some features of pupil achievement are outstanding. This is because of the high quality of teaching and learning that pupils experience.

- Pupils make good or better progress in lessons and their attainment is often higher than the expectations for their age. They are enthusiastic

about history and develop their knowledge and understanding at a rapid rate. For example, younger pupils now have a good understanding of the life of a slave. Pupils' standards in the use of information communication technology ICT in history are above average.

- Pupils of all ages are making excellent progress in developing their historical skills. They are working with a wide range of sources and can evaluate these well. Pupils know the differences between primary and secondary sources, about their interpretation and about their reliability.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They are highly motivated, ask perceptive questions and many undertake additional research at home.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features.

- The short-term planning is detailed and takes into account the wide range of ages and abilities in classes.
- The good range of activities encourages appropriate in-depth learning. There is a good emphasis on using a wide range of historical sources and asking pertinent questions about their reliability.
- There is a brisk pace to the learning and time is efficiently used. Plenary sessions are well used. The emphasis on research and work in pairs and/or groups means that the level of challenge and pupils' responses are often outstanding.
- Teachers have excellent questioning skills which extend the knowledge and understanding of the pupils. The pupils, in turn, respond enthusiastically to the questioning and some demonstrate very good background knowledge in history. They have gained this from their own research on the internet and through visits to places of historical interest with their parents or carers.
- Relationships are excellent. Pupils work in a mature and responsible manner with each other and with the adults. They maintain their concentration for sustained periods, for example in the ICT suite.
- All classrooms are good learning environments for history. There is a good range of appropriate work on display and teachers refer to this in whole-class questioning when relevant.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good with outstanding features.

- The study of history is given prominence throughout the school and the subject is reflected well in work on display in classrooms and in communal areas.
- The programmes of study are brought alive by an excellent range of resources and experiences. Pupils regularly take part in historical feasts

and they wear historical costumes. They take part in historical dances, handle artefacts, make models, write letters, participate in drama and take part in oral history by talking with older relatives, for example grandparents.

- Pupils visit places of historical interest such as Sulgrave Manor and visitors are regularly invited to talk to them about aspects of history. Some visitors engage in role play with the pupils. Time capsules from earlier periods are sometimes hidden in the school grounds for pupils to find.
- The curriculum is enriched by good use of the internet and digital cameras.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features.

- The curriculum leader has responsibilities for other subjects within this small school. However, with your support, she has led the subject very effectively. She is enthusiastic, dedicated and has a passion for history.
- She has developed history extremely well throughout the school. The subject benefits from excellent planning and the creation of a wide range of resources.
- The curriculum leader has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses within the subject. She interviews pupils, scrutinises their work in history, talks with other staff and advises on their planning. She has observed some lessons in the past but has not been able to do much recently because of budgetary constraints on the school and because of other pressures on her time.

Subject issue: ICT

The provision and use of ICT are excellent. The school has a good number of work stations, interactive whiteboards and it has recently acquired digital cameras and 10 wireless laptops. Staff are competent at using these resources effectively. In addition, most pupils have access to internet facilities at home. As a result, pupils have very good skills in ICT. For example, they can use various search engines, can create Power Point presentations, and can download and paste images to these presentations.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good with outstanding features.

- Teachers have an excellent understanding of the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and those who are gifted or talented.
- Those pupils who have been identified with learning difficulties have been set appropriate targets and these are regularly evaluated. Record keeping of progress towards the targets set is good.

- Teaching assistants work closely with relevant pupils and with the teachers. Their role is routinely identified in lesson planning, along with the targets that the pupils are working towards. The teaching assistants enable the pupils to make at least good progress.
- Those pupils who are gifted or talented are set extension activities, both in classrooms and for work to be done at home. Some higher attaining pupils are fascinated with history and study it extensively outside the school.

An area for improvement, which we discussed, included the need to:

- ensuring that the curriculum leader is able to observe more lessons so that she gains a first-hand view of teaching and learning in history.

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