

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 Keenan  
Headteacher  
St Anne's Catholic Primary School  
Lowe Street  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B12 OER

Dear Mrs Keenan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 October 2007 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 gifted and talented provision within 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 relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Overall, standards are average but pupils make good progress given their very low attainment on entry.

- The low attainment on entry is partly explained by the above average proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and also by the significant number who start school at an early stage of acquiring English.

- The good general focus that the school places on helping pupils acquire proficiency in English means that work in history generally improves each succeeding year.
- More able pupils are given satisfactory support but still, they could do could do better with more focused teaching offering greater challenge.
- Pupils' personal development is satisfactory but this masks good progress, from a low base on entry, in the ability of many pupils to speak confidently and ask pertinent questions about their history topics. Pupils have a clear grasp of right and wrong and can apply this distinction to events and personalities in history.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

The good progress that pupils make in history is a direct response to the good teaching and support provided by staff. This has been achieved by sharing good practice and careful planning.

- This work is now being strengthened by the Deputy Headteacher who is temporarily acting as subject co-ordinator and who is driving through more rigorous assessment and tracking procedures in the subject. This is already having an impact in terms of good quality marking and comments in pupils' books.
- Resources are good and there are good opportunities for staff to visit other schools to gain further ideas. The co-ordinator rightly identifies the current basic planning for progression in skills as an area for improvement.
- Support staff are used well to enable pupils with learning difficulties to make the most of learning opportunities in lessons. Pupils respond well to their history lessons and are developing their history learning skills well.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school is currently in the process of reviewing and re-shaping its history curriculum to enable more cross-curricular links to be developed and for history to act as a key vehicle for enriching basic skills work. This review is beginning to impact on lesson activities but requires further development to ensure the planned links fully respect the requirements of the subjects concerned.
- The school also is aware that more could be done to use the experiences and resources of people in the local community, and its history, to enable pupils to understand their world better.

- Recently there has been a welcome increase in the provision of information and communications technology (ICT) in the school, especially interactive whiteboards. However, opportunities for pupils to interact with the whiteboards are limited.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of history are satisfactory.

- The subject leader has focused well on driving general school improvement through introducing more rigorous assessment and tracking procedures which are also making a positive impact in history.
- There are coherent plans for further key improvements once the next subject leader is in place, such as driving forward stronger curriculum links and making further use of the local community as a history resource. Self evaluation within the subject is satisfactory.

## Subject issue – gifted and talented

More able pupils are supported by the school, but have not benefited from a thorough review of what they need if they are to flourish as able young historians. Teachers do adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of different children but not enough to challenge more able historians effectively.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- There is no apparent difference between the performance of boys and girls in history. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well served by appropriately trained learning support assistants.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing, further, the current review of the curriculum so that the role of history as a key vehicle for improving basic skills is strengthened
- ensuring that the needs of more able historians are met effectively
- enriching the history curriculum by tapping the experiences of local people and their histories
- ensuring that pupils use electronic whiteboards in a more interactive way.

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

Peter Limm  
Her Majesty's Inspector