

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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



29 September 2008

Mrs J Wardell  
Headteacher  
Warthill CE VC Primary School  
Warthill  
York  
North Yorkshire  
YO19 5XL

Dear Mrs Wardell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 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 information and communication technology (ICT) in history and on provision for gifted and talented history pupils.

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, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are above average.

- Pupils make good progress and some make outstanding progress in developing their historical knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils enjoy history. They are eager to learn and they can talk and write confidently about their work. Pupils in Key Stage 2, for example, spoke with accuracy and clarity about Richard III, the battle of Bosworth and the reign of Henry VII.
- Historical skills are being developed well, with pupils' understanding of interpretation and other view points being particularly strong. However, not all skills are as well developed as interpretation.

- Pupils are encouraged to ask questions, seek out answers and use the information to produce accurate descriptions and explanations. This helps to explain why they make good progress in history. The individual studies produced by pupils in Key Stage 2 demonstrate their commitment and interest in their work. However, the studies lack an evaluative focus. As a result, pupils do not benefit as much as they might from the immense amount of work they put into this activity.
- Pupils' personal development in history is outstanding. Pupils have a thirst for learning, are extremely well motivated and are fully engaged in their learning. They are well behaved, polite and courteous. They take a great pride in their work and they engage in discussion with each other and with adults in a mature manner.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they skilfully engage the pupils in their work.
- Lessons are well planned, have clear objectives and a range of suitable activities. Questioning is a strength of teaching and the effective use of initial and supplementary questions helps to reinforce pupils' understanding. Learning is well matched to individual needs.
- Work is marked thoroughly and pupils' achievements are praised and celebrated. Comments by teachers are helpful but they tend to be of a general nature and guidance on how to improve in history is rarely given. Assessment practice is not consistent and levels of attainment are not routinely used.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and meets requirements. The small number of pupils in each year group means that the school follows a two-year rolling programme in Key Stage 1 and a four-year programme in Key Stage 2. The school acknowledges that it is appropriate to review its history policy and the current curriculum to ensure that the most suitable topics are taught.
- Cross-curricular links are strong at both key stages and this helps to strengthen pupils' learning. Literacy is particularly well developed and teachers take every opportunity to make links with other subjects, such as art and the Tudor portrait work being undertaken in Key Stage 2.
- Visits to relevant places of interest and the use of experts who come into school are well developed and the pupils can talk extensively about what they have learned from these experiences. Trips to such places as York Castle Museum, Ryedale Fold Museum and the Royal Armouries are firmly related to work in the classroom and they contribute effectively to the pupils' learning.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are good.

- In this small school the subject leader also has responsibility for other subjects. Nevertheless, her thoughtful and conscientious approach ensures that the subject is taught successfully. She has a clear picture of the strengths and areas for improvement.
- All teachers enjoy teaching history and they are well supported by the headteacher and by the support staff.
- The subject is well organised and limited resources are used wisely.
- The confederation of the school with a neighbouring primary school offers an opportunity to share good practice and to consider how to develop the subject further.

## Subject issue: ICT

The use of ICT in history is satisfactory.

- Both classrooms have digital projectors and whiteboards but problems with hardware have meant that this equipment has not been extensively used.
- Pupils use computers for word processing and for research, and they are taught how to interrogate websites. The use of an ICT checklist when producing projects helps the pupils to consider how they might best produce their work. However, the use of ICT in history is underdeveloped.

## Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented history students

- No pupil is at present registered as being gifted in history. However, the school is aware of those pupils who show particular strengths in the subject and appropriate provision is made for them in lessons, for example through research exercises.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the full range of pupils' historical skills
- developing assessment practice, particularly feedback to ensure that pupils are given precise advice on how they can improve their work
- reviewing the whole school history policy and the current curriculum to ensure that the most suitable topics are taught.

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

Michael Maddison  
Her Majesty's Inspector  
Ofsted's Specialist Adviser for History