

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

**T** 0300 123 1231  
**F** 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr M Purdy  
Headteacher  
Great Hollands Primary School  
Wordsworth  
Bracknell  
Berkshire  
RG12 8YR

Dear Mr Purdy

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: history**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 15 July 2010 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- Pupils have excellent attitudes; they enjoy the subject and, as a result, work well in class. They have at least satisfactory knowledge of the topics studied, with some good quality descriptive writing and drawing of artefacts in their exercise books. Weaker aspects seen, particularly in written work, include research skills of limited depth and a limited ability to use evidence to make judgements. Some pupils have a restricted sense of chronology linked to the topics studied. Overall, the standards attained by pupils are satisfactory but there are examples of some very good work.

- Pupils' personal development is good. For example, Year 3/4's response to the story of Anne Frank was sensitive and showed understanding. Pupils' self-confidence develops through opportunities to present their work successfully in front of class.

### **Quality of teaching in history**

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- Teachers are highly committed to the subject and are knowledgeable about the topics that they teach. They have very good relationships with pupils and do their best to provide support and encouragement. The small amount of teaching seen during the inspection varied in quality and included some which was outstanding. Teaching assistants are used to varying effect. At times during lessons they played too limited a role in supporting both the pupils and the teachers.
- Although examples of good questioning of pupils were seen, a significant weakness is that there are not enough opportunities for the pupils to pose their own questions, hypothesise and discover the answers. A wide range of resources is available but they are not always adapted sufficiently to meet the needs and abilities of pupils. As a result, the extent to which assessment information is used to inform teaching is uncertain. In lessons, it is not always clear to teachers what pupils have learnt.

### **Quality of the curriculum in history**

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- The current curriculum covers topics such as Guy Fawkes, Roman invaders and the Victorians. Pupils are very positive about the topics covered. The curriculum provides teachers with a clear structure which gives them confidence. Good links are made with other subjects, notably English, drama and art. Pupils very much enjoy the excellent number of trips to historical venues.
- Topics are not taught chronologically, which is a weakness. As indicated earlier, it was clear that pupils were not always confident with chronology. The overall aims of the history curriculum are not entirely clear and important issues, such as the subject's contribution to community cohesion, have not been considered formally. However, the school has started to select topics of more immediate relevance to pupils and their futures; for example, the local study of Bracknell.
- The way that the school has developed the curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. For example, the study of castles as part of the development

of children's knowledge and understanding of the world has provided many imaginative opportunities, including a jousting match using wooden horses.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in history**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is satisfactory.

- Leadership, including that in the Foundation Stage, has a sharp focus on raising standards and providing support for pupils. Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses and are developing strategies to tackle weaknesses. They are concerned about moving the subject forward and are currently exploring various ways to support this. The management team is committed and has the potential to develop the subject further.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- providing more opportunities for pupils to pose their own questions, research in greater depth, and use this evidence to reach conclusions
- ensuring that the curriculum, while remaining interesting and fun, provides knowledge and understanding to help pupils understand the world in which they live
- improving consistency in the quality of teaching.

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

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

Yours sincerely

**Paul Armitage**  
**Additional Inspector**