

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 D Girdler
Headteacher
Walton Holymoorside
Holymoorside Road
Holymoorside
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S42 7DU

Dear Mrs Girdler

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 June 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 you and the deputy headteacher, discussions with pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, an analysis of pupils' work and the observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Pupils' achievement is generally satisfactory but progress in the past has been uneven. This is because there is a legacy of underachievement which is beginning to be addressed by the senior leaders.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons and the younger pupils, for instance, are aware of how houses have changed over the years, while those in Years 3 and 4 are soundly developing their chronological understanding.

- Aspects of pupils' historical skills are being gradually developed but these are still limited. Pupils are not aware of a broad enough range of historical sources or how to interpret different kinds of evidence.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They work well with others and maintain good attitudes to their work. Many are well motivated and will independently research topics that interest them.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- An in-depth scrutiny of pupils' work over time indicates that teaching and learning are satisfactory, although good teaching was observed during this inspection.
- Lessons are well planned. Teachers are well organised and manage their classes extremely well. The needs of all abilities of pupils are identified and appropriate strategies used to meet these needs. The efficient use of additional support staff and the setting of a variety of activities ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Teachers have good questioning skills and pupils respond well to these. They are encouraged to speculate about answers and the safe learning environment means they are not afraid to do so.
- The learning is well paced with brisk questioning and the use of explicit timescales for particular activities. Teachers make regular whole-class teaching points to ensure there is no misunderstanding of any issues by the pupils.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is generally satisfactory.

- The curriculum is broad and generally meets requirements. However, some aspects are not being fully covered, for example the coverage of Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain is extremely limited.
- The school has a two-year planning cycle. The planning in the past has not covered topics to the required breadth and depth and this has led to uneven achievement for pupils.
- The curriculum is enhanced by the use of outside visitors, for example veterans from past wars and experts on Tudor times. Pupils said they enjoyed meeting such visitors. There are a few visits to places of historical interest but this aspect of the work in history is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management of history

The leadership and management of history are satisfactory.

- The leadership and management of the subject are in a state of transition. The deputy headteacher currently leads the subject on a temporary basis but another member of staff will lead the subject from September 2008.

- The deputy headteacher has a sound understanding of provision in the subject and is very knowledgeable about strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning. However, the subject needs more permanent leadership and direction so that curriculum planning and other improvements can be driven forward with greater urgency.

Subject issue: ICT

The use of ICT is good.

- Teachers are competent users of ICT, especially the interactive whiteboards which are located in every classroom.
- Pupils' ICT skills are being developed well. They are confident users of computers and have a good range of skills, including word processing and PowerPoint presentations.

Subject issue: provision for gifted and talented pupils in history

The school has a register for gifted and talented pupils but no pupil has been identified as gifted in history. However, in-depth day-to-day planning by teachers ensures that the needs of gifted pupils are met well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included the need to ensure that:

- all curricular requirements are met
- pupils' progress continues to improve and their historical skills are more systematically developed
- the subject has more permanent leadership and management.

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