

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs C Ward-Lewis
Headteacher
Sheepy Magna CofE Primary School
Main Road
Sheepy Magna
Atherstone
CV9 3QR

Dear Mrs Ward-Lewis

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 November 2009 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 the contribution of history to community cohesion and the development of independent learning 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with you, staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and an analysis of pupils' work. History was not being taught during the day but a learning walk was undertaken covering three lessons where aspects of history were being taught.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement is good.

- Pupils make good progress in history from relatively low starting points and achieve standards that are average.
- Older pupils in Key Stage 2 have good knowledge and understanding of historical events, such as the Battle of Bosworth, and they know how their village has changed over time.

- Pupils are developing their historical skills well. For instance, their chronological understanding is enhanced through the use of timelines. Some primary evidence, such as old photographs, is evaluated well.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are invariably polite and well-mannered. Their attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Pupils say that they make suggestions of what to study in history through the school council. They feel they are listened to and the school will try to meet their wishes if appropriate.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching is good.

- Lessons are planned well and teachers know the needs of all pupils, enabling them to make good progress. There is a good learning environment and individual pupils are supported well.
- Pupils are keen to learn and they enjoy studying history. They work well together in pairs and in small groups. Many are keen to participate in whole-class discussions. Some undertake extended research activities at home.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and they are given good written and oral feedback. The school is developing a good approach to the assessment of historical skills. Pupils are encouraged to gather evidence and explain what they can and cannot do. Pupils value this approach.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is broad and generally well-balanced. Suitable topics are studied in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- At Key Stage 2, the curriculum is undergoing substantial transformation. A themed approach has been recently devised for all the foundation subjects. Whole-school planning has been undertaken for two of the four years and there is planning for the development of a wide range of historical skills. It is important for the school to ensure that all curricular requirements for history are met through this approach.
- Pupils' enjoyment of history is enhanced through visits to a good range of historical places. They visit the nearby site of the Battle of Bosworth and other places, including Tamworth Castle, a Tudor manor house and Merivale Hall. Visitors regularly come into the school to talk about aspects of history, and staff from the Space Centre visited recently.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good.

- History is led and managed well under the general approach to the themed curriculum. There is a clear view within the school of how the subject should be developed in the future.
- There is a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning of history. The small number of staff regularly discuss the subject, and views are sought from parents and pupils. Every attempt is made to improve the provision wherever possible.
- Developments in history are supported through a policy on the subject and the construction of an appropriate action plan.

Subject issue: the contribution of history to community cohesion

The contribution of history to community cohesion is satisfactory.

- The teaching of history has strong links with the local community. Pupils learn about Sheepy Magna as part of local history and there are strong links with the local church. Local residents come into school regularly to talk to pupils about aspects of local history.
- The school has plans to link up with an inner-city school to develop pupils' understanding of life in a culturally diverse society. However, the planning and teaching of history do not yet foster pupils' understanding of how the United Kingdom has developed as an ethnically and culturally diverse society.

Subject issue: the development of independent learning in history

The development of independent learning in history is good.

- Pupils enjoy learning history. They undertake lengthy research in lessons and in their own time, for example about Tudor houses.
- Pupils are keen to use information and communication technology (ICT). They are competent users of ICT and can use appropriate programmes for retrieving information, for example about the life of Mozart. They regularly use the internet for research purposes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the planning for the evolving themed curriculum incorporates all the requirements for the teaching and learning of history
- ensuring that the subject contributes more explicitly to the school's approach to community cohesion by:
 - incorporating history within the school's plan for community cohesion
 - teaching pupils more explicitly about how the United Kingdom has evolved into an ethnically and culturally diverse society.

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
Additional Inspector