

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr G D Bollands
Headteacher
St Ann's Heath Junior School
Sandhills Lane
Virginia Water
Surrey
GU25 4DS

Dear Mr Bollands

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 13 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 good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Pupils enjoy history. They are attentive in lessons and get involved by thinking hard, using their knowledge and expressing opinions. They respond well to the opportunities offered in class and for homework to do their own research using books, video and the internet. The quality of their oral and written communications, and their wall displays, is generally high.
- Although attainment overall is average, some pupils attain standards which are well above average.
- Achievement varies; for many pupils it is good and for some it is outstanding. However, not all pupils achieve as well as they might. In group work, one or more pupils occasionally dominate and group attention slips.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about history and they convey this well to pupils. They know the subject well and plan lessons carefully. Central to teachers' success is the weight they give to encouraging pupils to work independently or in groups, to research evidence and reach conclusions about historical issues. Most pupils respond well to this. Resources are used very well, including out-of-school visits and visitors to the school.
- Teachers set appropriate work and deploy teaching assistants effectively to meet pupils' broad range of abilities. However, they recognise that this could be further refined. An assessment system has been introduced this year and the school intends to use the information to adjust teaching and the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils more precisely.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum covers familiar topics such as the Ancient Greeks, the Aztecs, Henry VIII and the Second World War. It meets pupils' needs in that they enjoy the topics and they find the learning activities linked to the topics interesting and fun. It provides the basis for the development of pupils' chronological knowledge and historical skills, the latter particularly well.
- As a result of its interpretation by teachers, the curriculum encourages creativity, especially when pupils are encouraged to take the initiative. However, it can be improved by introducing topics that will help pupils to understand the background to the world in which they live. The school has begun to tackle this by an imaginative programme which explores the heritage of the school's Traveller pupils.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in history is good.

- Senior leaders give substantial support to the subject; they and the coordinator have a clear understanding of the need to focus on developing pupils' historical knowledge and skills. Self-evaluation is effective and includes gaining a good understanding of pupils' attitudes to the subject through an annual pupils' questionnaire. Leaders are open to new ideas, such as the newly introduced assessment system and curriculum innovation. They are well-placed to develop the subject further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further development of the curriculum to make it even more relevant to the needs and interests of the pupils
- further development of the assessment system to inform 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