

07 December 2006

Mrs Lynch
Headteacher
Cherry Tree Primary School
Church Road
Basildon
Essex
SS16 4AG

Dear Mrs Lynch

Ofsted survey inspection programme – history

Thank you for making my visit on the 27 November so enjoyable and informative. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at work in history, the visit had a particular focus on literacy 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 made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history in your school was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- Standards in history are below average, but are improving. Pupils struggle particularly with expressing their ideas in writing and although the school is working hard to improve the quality of their written work, more remains to be done, particularly on extended writing. Pupils of all abilities and ages make good progress in several aspects of their historical learning. They make particularly good progress in historical enquiry and research skills, for

example, and have developed a keen sense of historical curiosity by the time they leave the school. Progress in extended writing is satisfactory.

- Pupils are becoming confident learners who enjoy their history lessons.
- By Year 6, pupils show a growing understanding of change over time and about how to study history. All pupils show a good recall of earlier work and Year 6 learners are well prepared for work at Key Stage 3.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with many good features.

- The evidence indicates that teaching is improving. Pupils enjoy learning because they have a lot of fun and practical activities in lessons. Pupils are positive about their history lessons.
- Teachers make good use of resources such as visitors, music and information technology to prompt questions and investigative work. Parents and pupils, for example, recently worked on building a Viking ship at a local sculpture park.
- Marking is regular and helpful. In some lessons, however, there are too many worksheets that do not motivate the pupils and do not help them to develop their writing skills.
- It is difficult for the school to track progression in history and so assess pupils' progress properly because they use one exercise book for all their foundation subjects. Work in these books is not as neatly presented as the work in pupils' literacy books.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features.

- There are strengths in cross-curricular links, such as the use of music, to enhance the quality of learning. Year 5 pupils are currently involved in a photography project called 'Our Town, Our Heritage' that involves photographing places on the Basildon Heritage Trail and writing about them. The project involves a professional photographer and a writer.
- The scheme of work is clear and the curriculum meets statutory requirements.
- There is scope for a review of the history curriculum, as part of a planned whole-school review, to further develop its creativity and focus on literacy skills.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Self-evaluation is good and the subject leader has accurately identified both the strengths and areas for development. She has many good ideas to further improve the subject, and these are beginning to bear fruit, although they have not yet had time to be reflected in pupils' standards.

Focus: Literacy in history

- This is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for pupils to write at different lengths and for different purposes. The school is working hard to tackle the issue of extended writing.
- Pupils enjoy writing and are proud of their efforts.

Inclusion

- The provision for inclusion is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as those with English as an additional language, are well supported and the school has a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include the need to:

- further review the curriculum
- continue to work on helping pupils to improve their writing skills
- improve the means for judging pupils' progress in history.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in your 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn Bappa
Additional Inspector