



Historical Association Quality Mark Final Report

Visit to: Annunciation RC Junior School (remote assessment)

15 October 2020

Situated in Burnt Oak, this junior school of approximately 200 pupils has a high number of children from low-income families and a very high school deprivation indicator. A high percentage of children are from minority ethnic groups. Black African heritage pupils form 36% - compared with 5.5% nationally. 56% pupils have a first language that is not English compared to 21% nationally. 16% pupils receive SEND support higher than local and national figures.

Because of Covid this was a remote assessment. In addition to the portfolio, extensive video evidence of 2 lessons (Year 4 and Year 6), an interview with a group of pupils and a learning walk was provided and a detailed remote dialogue took place with the subject lead.

1.) Learning, Teaching and Achievement

Extensive video footage was provided of two lessons – a Year 4 and a Year 6 class. Both focused on the historical process particularly the use of evidence. The Year 6 lesson was excellent with a rapid pace, relevance and a sharp focus on historical objectives. It covered issues that developed and reinforced the pupils' understanding – why it was important to know particular information and history in general, sequencing and creating timelines including the idea of duration, sorting and categorising historical information. The teacher effectively used pupil misconception to challenge ideas. The enquiry focus was on how much the Greeks and Romans borrowed from each other. Sources were analysed as a whole class including reliability and how to deal with conflicting evidence. Pupils seemed to grasp the importance of corroboration.

The Year 4 class was also very good but the pupils were slightly less confident. Again the focus was strongly on the historical process with the class looking at contrasting evidence about Boudicca. They considered how and why interpretations might differ. Pupils showed an awareness of time terms such as BCE, decade and century. There was useful discussion on how to frame and refine an enquiry. The plenary was an overall assessment of Boudicca having examined further sources such as images.

The evidence base also included an extensive discussion with four pupils (Years 5 and 6) about their understanding of and attitudes to history. It demonstrated that pupils were well aware of how history is produced, of the importance of interrogating sources and how much they enjoyed their history. They enjoyed, for example, “looking at different opinions” and learning that “everything was not true”. They recognised that history was important for challenging myths and that historical evidence was all around them. They were aware of a range of useful sources such as wills. They were also able to articulate what they found difficult including comparing beliefs across time periods. They could identify some of their difficulties in history. Overall there was plentiful evidence that pupils can talk about their learning in great depth.

The teaching is helped by some detailed and focused planning especially at medium term level. An example was provided in the portfolio of Stone Age to Iron Age and revealed very careful

consideration of learning objectives, key content, lesson ideas resources and assessment for learning. Thought is also given in the planning to differentiation (and the video lessons also saw effective use of teaching assistants). The planning also addresses how the enquiry should help progress in history. There is a strong emphasis on independence, enquiry and the close questioning of historical evidence. There are frequent questions on how we know and how history can be contested. Pupils were often asked to make decisions and weigh up a period of history, eg. "which is better to live in – Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Age?" or "if you had been Caesar would you have invaded?". Follow up discussion showed this level and quality of planning has been produced for all the history taught in the school.

The teaching also shows some interesting strategies to engage pupils. Topics are introduced, for example, by a "history mystery" where they have to do some finding out about the topic they are about to explore, the use of KWL grids and preliminary timelines. Overall there is a strong emphasis on interactive timelines. They are displayed in each classroom. The subject is enhanced by the appointment of some "history ambassadors" amongst the pupils. These ambassadors might be engaged in a variety of tasks such as testing apps that might be used in lessons. Follow up discussion revealed an impressive range of other teaching and learning strategies such as role play, drama, research and virtual visits.

From the evidence provided standards seemed to be very good especially given the school's intake. There is both internal and external moderation. History uses a very detailed assessment/progress checklist. Through a scrutiny of the work done in books, a series of criteria assesses progress across a range of measures covering a) historical understanding and knowledge sub-divided into age-related expectations for chronological understanding and vocabulary; interpretation; historical enquiry; range and depth of knowledge b) marking and assessment c) organisation and communication d) differentiation – especially looking at pupil premium, SEND, middle ability and boys/girls. e) impact since the last scrutiny f) action needed. This is an impressive document and replaces a more generic one largely designed for English. This scrutiny of pupil work is carried out meticulously and the last column indicates it is quite rigorous and evaluative with identified improvements. Other forms of assessment take place in lessons such as a three-tick strategy and children self assessing. Summative assessment takes place each term.

These measures help to ensure consistency of history teaching and learning across the school. It is also aided by initiatives such as paired and team teaching. Pupil evaluations take place at the end of themes. There are many positive comments suggesting that pupils not only understand the purpose of history but enjoy it, can suggest ways in which it can be improved, what has surprised them, new vocabulary they have learnt and what are the next steps they need to take. Further evidence of pupil enjoyment and learning comes from the governor reviews of the subject. They refer to varied and interesting lessons, good questioning, the effective use of timelines and interested and engaged children.

Externally the subject leader attends cluster groups which include standardisation exercises. The school performs strongly compared to other schools. There could be some benefit in expanding this external standardisation and discussions further. It is also apparent that the outcomes of this assessment are analysed and acted upon. For example, it indicated that boys were slightly underperforming and the subject lead then introduced strategies to raise their standards such as more use of artefacts.

The videoed learning walk showed that the subject is well resourced. There is a specialist resource area with organised labelled history topic boxes. These contain an impressive variety of artefacts including many replicas. This has been reallocated to improve access. There is also

a good selection of history materials in the school library.

The evidence suggests that teaching, learning and achievement is at the gold standard.

This is primarily for the focused, high quality teaching and the effective use of detailed monitoring information.

To develop further, the school may want to consider:

- Developing further the benchmarking of school history standards against other schools (QM 1:4).

2.) Leadership

The subject lead has a history specialism as part of her teaching degree. The enthusiasm and commitment to the subject are readily apparent. So is the high level of awareness of the key characteristics of effective primary history. The subject lead has been keen to develop her own skills and attended CPD including that provided by the Historical Association. Recent CPD has included subject leader training and practical approaches to primary history as well as a course on Benin. To support her development further she has joined a local history society.

History in the school has widespread support. Evidence suggests that the senior leadership team are passionate about the teaching of the humanities and there is a recognition that the subject is one of the strengths of the school and that it is extremely well lead. It is a testament to the senior team level of commitment that the headteacher wants to take personal charge of the subject during the subject lead's maternity leave to ensure the momentum is maintained. The subject receives a generous budget. The school development plan gives a prominent place for the subject with targets for improving writing in the subject, skills and knowledge development, monitoring and tracking and obtaining the Quality Mark. Many of these have already been achieved.

One major piece of evidence for these successes is a staff evaluation survey which compares subjects in 2019 and 2020. The current subject leader has been in charge of history during this period. The figures show a rise in the proportion in the very highest category of those who felt the subject was well prepared from 38% to 62%; resourcing improving from 38% to 87% and the quality of history CPD for staff rising from 12% to 75%. The current ratings are almost 100% when the top two measurements are considered. Individual staff comments refer to the effectiveness of the subject leader, the help given to colleagues and the massively raised profile of the subject. There was also a high level of praise for particular history initiatives such as History Week. Overall others in the schools refer to her influence as enriching and impactful.

Administration is exemplary. There is an updated policy outlining intent, implementation and impact. Key systems such as the progress monitoring have been referred to above. Monitoring of the history throughout the school is systematic and regular. Resources are carefully audited and organised. The work organised during the recent Covid lockdown also illustrates the efficiency. This is further outlined in the Enrichment section below. The development priorities for the subject have been clearly thought through, are realistic and identify issues that seem worthwhile as evidenced by the portfolio. They include further progress and attainment especially amongst particular groups of pupils, extending the range of creative teaching

approaches, refining the use of the skills progression document including further CPD for staff and further raising teacher aspirations in the subject.

The support given by the subject lead to other staff is also impressive. Planning is sent each week and examples were provided of very detailed, constructive and effective feedback and ideas. Additionally there is CPD in the subject for staff every half term. Evidence showed quality presentations on aspects such as planning. There is close liaison with other key staff such as the SENCO and with governors. Overall this is a very impressive achievement just two years after taking on the subject lead role.

The evidence suggests that leadership is at the gold standard.

This is primarily for the organisation, management and administration and the way the subject has been transformed and become a central part of the school during the tenure of the subject lead.

3.) Curriculum

History is a non-negotiable subject on the weekly timetable having approximately a one-hour slot. Additionally history is covered in other curriculum areas and through initiatives such as History Week. This initiative is now being extended to History Fortnight to help further catch up after the recent lockdown.

The history curriculum adopts the National Curriculum areas of study and uses a broadly chronological approach. It has used the HA schemes but adapted them to suit the circumstances of the school. Year 3 covers Stone Age, an introduction to Ancient Civilisations and Ancient Egypt whilst Year 4 links Romans through Ancient Greece and Rome with Ancient Greece. The Year 5 classes cover Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Benin with Year 6 focusing on a local study and a development study of crime and punishment. The local study uses the nearby RAF Museum to look at flight and the experiences of World War 2.

Other subjects allow the history to be extended. Several literacy books are history focused such as Roald Dahl's "Boy" which examines life in Victorian times and geography is used to look at changes in Burnt Oak. Mathematics links with Roman numerals and technology provides opportunities for models to be made, eg. Egyptian shadoof, Viking longships and air raid shelters. A study of Henry Moore and his wartime experiences also provides a connection with the Year 6 local history enquiry. Art is also covered when looking at Stonehenge. British values are given a strong emphasis in history and anniversaries are covered through assemblies such as Remembrance and the role of significant individuals.

The school is aware of diversity issues and has been a strong advocate of Black History Month. Plenty of evidence of this was available in the displays. The timelines of children from different backgrounds have been investigated and celebrated. There has also been coverage of more unusual aspects such as African music and the lives of black saints – one prominent example in the school was St Josephine Bakhita from Sudan. There was also evidence of some interesting enquiries. For example, "how far did Rosa Parks pave the way for Michelle Obama?". The school is aware that Black History Month alone does not fully address the diversity issue and the subject lead is in the process of examining all the curriculum for ways in which diversity may be better addressed, particularly through the coverage of British history.

The evidence suggests that the curriculum is at the silver/gold border standard.

This is primarily for the range of curricular experiences, its appropriateness to the pupils, ways in which the history curriculum is enhanced, the awareness of the importance of diversity and for initiatives such as History Week/Fortnight.

To develop further, the school may want to consider:

- Enhancing further the local history through the school (QM 3:1)
- Continuing the audit and implementation of diversity (in its widest sense) throughout the school (QM 3:1)

4.) Enrichment

The videoed learning walk revealed just how prominent history is about the school. There were common features in all classrooms – timelines, key vocabulary and enquiries. Each door also seems to have its history-designed entrance. There are enticements to go the extra mile in history. Awards are made of “historian of the week” and history questions are put up about the school every fortnight for other classes to answer – a way of reinforcing previous knowledge. There are questions to answer such as “why is local history important?” There is also a lunchtime history club on a Thursday largely child-led expanding on classwork activities, looking at sources, producing time capsules or doing practical activities such as making masks. A special History Week is arranged with workshops etc. For example, Year 5s is on the Vikings. Assemblies and even hymn practices are used to address historical issues.

The school does engage in a number of history visits and also receives some visitors. Year 3, for instance, visit the Chiltern Open Air Museum which includes a workshop from a “Stone Age person”. Year 4 visit the Roald Dahl Museum and, as part of their local history, Year 6 visit the RAF Museum at Hendon and also have a local person come into school to recount her wartime experiences. The cost of visits is a problem for the school but history has benefitted from an extensive development of virtual visits to museums as well as visitors to the school. The latter has included speakers on Ancient Egypt, Ancient Rome, Saxons and Vikings as well as pupils interviewing elderly people about their lives.

Parental surveys for 2020 show very positive ratings for being kept informed about history and for their satisfaction of its appropriateness, challenges and excitement and how important it is regarded in the school. One reason for its prominence is the coverage in the school’s weekly newsletter which always contains a history question of the week. Parents also see copies of the history homework arranged in the clever format of a meal menu with starters and a main course.

During the Covid school lockdown, the school was active in providing distance learning history activities. Use was made of Class Dojo. Each week children had a history task such as producing timelines, creating time capsules, researching or writing stories. The take-up was good. The few who were unable or unwilling to respond were followed up and later support provided in school. Strategies have now been put in place to catch up on some of the history

learning deficit that may have resulted from the lockdown.

The school liaises with the local infant school, other junior schools and a secondary school. There may be scope for improving links with the history in these schools to ensure even more effective continuity and coherence.

The evidence suggests that the enrichment is at the gold standard

This is primarily for the prominence and status of history throughout the school, the extra-curricular opportunities and the development of virtual links with the community.

To develop further, the school may want to consider:

- Improving further the coherence and progression of the history experience between feeder and contributory school (QM 4:2)

Final Comments:

The school has placed history at the core. Its prominence is accompanied by strong leadership, vibrant teaching and learning, a strong focus on the knowledge, skills and concepts and very positive attitudes to the subject. It has made very significant progress in the last couple of years which shows no signs of abating. It is recommended that the subject leader shares some of her expertise and ideas beyond the school such as contributing an article to "Primary History" or contributing to the HA's subject leader website

Despite the problems caused by Covid restrictions, the Historical Association is extremely grateful to all involved in making the assessment process an enjoyable, manageable and rewarding one especially the history subject lead, Grainne Griffin. Many thanks.

Award made? **Yes**

Date of Award: 15 October 2020

Level: Gold