



Historical Association Quality Mark Final Report

Visit to Forest Academy, Suffolk

Date: 2nd February 2022

Context:

Forest Academy is located in the rural town of Brandon, Suffolk. The school is a larger than average-sized primary school with 447 on roll. Most children are from white British backgrounds. There are 25% of children eligible for pupil premium and 18% SEND. The majority of children are white British with 14% EAL children and 0.4% LAC.

Evidence for the assessment was obtained through a scrutiny of an excellent portfolio, a learning walk, and discussions with the senior leadership team, class teachers, children, and the subject leader. The assessor also observed lessons across different age ranges.

1.) Learning, Teaching and Achievement: *The outcome for section 1 of the QM criteria is that the school has attained Gold in all areas of this section.*

The discussions and surveys with the children have helped to inform future planning and curriculum refinement. Evidence from the learning walk, the Y3 and Y6 lesson observations and the assessors' own discussions with the children show how well they use artefacts and resources to prompt questions and also seamlessly linking periods of history together. In particular the children in Y6 made very good analytical comments about the Mayan artefacts. The children's responses from the children in both classes were enthusiastic and informed with good reasoning and knowledge about the subject. The children enjoy history and were able to talk articulately about cross-curricular links, specifically with English, geography, SMSC, art and DT.

History data shows how well children achieve and in particular compared to aspects of English such as oracy and writing. This is also true for children with SEND, pupil premium and other groups such as LAC. The school places a lot of emphasis on supporting these disadvantaged children. They are aiming to further raise attainment so that it is line with the spoken language data in the school. All groups on target to meet their expected levels. Attainment in Y1 and Y4 were not at expected levels at the end of last academic year. However, successful interventions such as improving the cultural capital which make topics more memorable for the children and developing opportunities for improving oracy and vocabulary have all proved successful. The data from September 2021 to December 2021 shows that attainment in history has risen by 6% points in Y1 and 7% points in Y4. This data reflect attainment in December 2021 and was compared to data in September 2021. It is drawn from detailed monitoring and evaluation together with teacher assessments. The data for these groups of children needs to be carefully monitored through the year to ensure that all children continue to make at least expected progress.

The portfolio, planning and lesson observations showed that a wide range of teaching and learning styles are used together with various history texts, artefacts and resources such as VR headsets together with a rich variety of enrichment activities. These enrichment activities, particularly those online, need to be continually explored so that the children can be offered a broad portfolio of online and face to face trips. Practical learning opportunities are also embedded into the teaching and learning. The lessons observed showed very skilful use of these strategies.

During the Ofsted inspection in 2021 they did a shallow dive into history. This proved was very positive, observing that the curriculum, planning and assessment across the school was very good. The use of knowledge organisers was also praised, which are used termly to support children's learning. The learning walk provided evidence that these are embedded into learning with all children using them quite naturally. They provide a very good basic overview of the topic including vocabulary and knowledge. There is a strong reading culture in the school using high quality history texts. Timelines are also used in every classroom to develop chronological understanding and connectivity between periods and other subjects. The children were able to explain links between people, places and events during the visit referring to the timelines.

Marking, which is led by a detailed policy with teacher comments and supplementary individualised questions together with lesson observations exposed the high-quality teacher questioning that takes place showing a real depth of teacher subject knowledge. Enquiry-based learning is also used as a learning style to very good effect which was evidenced in both lesson observations particularly Y6 where the children were exploring Mayan artefacts. The lesson observations showed how the children were motivated to learn, asking questions and eager to research the answers. The portfolio shows a clear progression from prior learning to new knowledge. There are robust systems in place for monitoring using a range of strategies focussing on knowledge, understanding and skills.

Points for consideration:

1. To closely monitor the data for the disadvantaged children to ensure that they are making progress in line with the schools own spoken language expectations.

2.) Leadership: *The outcome for section 2 of the QM criteria is that the school has attained Gold in all areas of this section.*

The status of history in the school is very strong. It has influenced the new 2021 curriculum and is a key player across many curricular areas. History was a major influence in online learning through covid providing resources and information for effective learning. The use of 'Padlet', which is a digital canvas to create projects on, was also instrumental in supporting learning over the last two years both in school and at home. This could be used further by developing enquiry questions and extended challenges for the children.

Discussions with the staff showed a genuine respect for history within the school. The teachers said that history had made a significant and positive impact on the curriculum. The discussion with other subject leaders evidenced their admiration for the history subject leader and their commitment to history as a subject which they believe is the driving force for learning and the curriculum through the school. The Head Teacher explained how history had had a significant impact on raising standards across the school particularly in oracy, which is a key area of development, and writing. There is a very good skills progression document from EYFS-Y6 in history together with excellent good CPD opportunities and day to day support based on the monitoring and evaluations in history. Staff feel very well supported.

The subject leader has clearly defined roles and responsibilities for history and these are exercised with dedication, professionalism and humility. Links with the governing body are strong with regular reports and updates provided by the subject leader as part of the monitoring process. The subject leader is currently studying for the NPQLT. History leadership and learning are a personal focus of study for the subject leader as she progresses through the course.

The school engages with its own 'deep dive' process in all subjects. All of these are updated through the year by the subject leaders and are shared collaboratively to ensure that there is good progression in skills and knowledge. The evidence from the deep dive is detailed and thorough. Pupil Asset is used as an assessment tool to enable the staff to individualise pupil progress. It shows attainment for different groups of children including SEND, EAL, LAC and those on pupil premium. The priority is to improve 'culture capital' especially for the disadvantaged children so that their learning becomes more holistic enabling them to place history and understand it more deeply with primary sources. This is something that was highlighted by the children from discussions. This detailed analysis of the data is used by the subject leader to inform CPD opportunities, planning together with the ongoing refinement of the curriculum. CPD is provided for the staff through HA webinars and other materials together with face-to-face CPD led by the subject leader and outside organisations such as the National College.

Point for consideration:

1. To continue to improve attainment for the most vulnerable children by developing innovative opportunities to extend their cultural capital

3.) Curriculum: *The outcome for section 3 of the QM criteria is that the school has attained Gold in all areas of this section.*

Evidence from the portfolio and discussions with the teachers indicates that history has been a key driver in developing long-term thematic planning in the school. The new curriculum covers a range of local, national and global topics chronologically from Y1-Y6. Ofsted commented how well the curriculum had been planned and its compatibility to the children in the school. It has clarity, covering the national statutory requirements showing progression in skills and knowledge. There is a very good time allocation given to history especially because of the integrated cross-curricular links which are made through the new curriculum. It is taught as a discrete subject but also as part of a planned cross curricular approach.

The progression in skills is supported by a separate document which was based on the monitoring of lesson observations and discussions with the children. It is clear from the discussions with the children and their books that the history curriculum really motivates them. The children talked enthusiastically about the progression in time and could articulately place their learning to other events in history. For example, the portfolio showed they could discuss how trade has developed over time and evidence in the books showed how they understood the progression from the Stone Age to the Iron Age.

There is now a knowledge progression map in place which explains key knowledge that the children need to know as they progress through the school. This helped tremendously through COVID enabling the teachers to highlight specific gaps in knowledge which are now being addressed in face-to-face lessons.

There are a number of changes that have been made this year including a new curriculum with supporting documents to aid teachers in their teaching and children in their learning. The subject leader needs to self-evaluate these documents to make sure they are fulfilling their objectives and aiding the learning process.

Point for consideration:

1. To monitor the new curriculum together with the effectiveness of the newly written supporting documents alongside other subject deep dives to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.

4.) Enrichment: *The outcome for section 4 of the QM criteria is that the school has attained Silver in all areas of this section with aspects of Gold.*

History is explicitly taught and the lesson observations showed good subject knowledge, excellent questioning and a positive engagement in learning. This was expertly done using history texts, artefacts, practical learning opportunities and other resources. History is linked to other curricular areas such as texts for English and as basis for developing oracy and writing. History is also linked to other subjects such as DT, art, geography, science, maths and SMSC.

Prior to COVID a wide range of trips were used to enhance learning and the children's cultural capital, especially for the more disadvantaged children. Through COVID, visitors have been utilised well to enhance learning together with practical learning and virtual trips to Norwich Castle and London museums. Discussions with the children show just how much they value these enrichment opportunities and how they have missed these physical experiences. The school are aiming to develop local history connections far more which should help to significantly increase the culture capital of the children. The subject leader has made an excellent start working with the local heritage museum and other local places of interest.

History has its own page on the website. This is very informative and attractively presented. The school also uses Twitter and Facebook to engage with parents showing video clips of children performing and engrossed in their learning. This use of technology and social media is good with them all being linked together through the website.

The school currently does not work with other schools and organisations. This is a recognised area for further development and was discussed on the visit with the subject leader. The good practice at Forest Academy should be

shared with other schools both locally and nationally. The research being undertaken by the subject leader through the NPQLT qualification should also be shared through a network of schools. This can be done through links with the HA, local and national schools, universities and other teacher training providers.

The school has a good relationship with parents but their involvement in the school is limited. This is also a recognised area of development. The major employer of the parents is Centre Parcs. They should be approached and a relationship forged. This would show that the school are interested in the parents and value their careers. The school could work with the parents to develop a careers curriculum for the children showing them what careers are available at Centre Parcs and elsewhere based on what they are learning in school. This will give the children a deeper purpose to their learning.

Point for consideration:

1. To develop links with other schools and organisations to promote the good work and expertise in history at Forest Academy.
2. To encourage greater parental engagement with the school. A good starting point would be to work with Centre Parcs who are the biggest local employer.

Final Comments:

The portfolio and visit were very well presented. The children in particular are highly enthusiastic and very well motivated. History makes a very positive contribution to the learning and the life of the school because of the subject leader's enthusiasm and competence together with the enthusiastic support from colleagues across the school.

The assessor would like to thank the subject leader, staff, and pupils of Forest Academy for making him feel most welcome through the day.

Award made: YES

Level: GOLD

Date of Award:

2nd February 2022

Renewal Date:

2nd February 2025