

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



31 January 2011

Mrs F Howarth  
Headteacher  
West Hatch High School  
High Road  
Chigwell  
Essex  
IG7 5BT

Dear Mrs Howarth

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: history**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 18 and 19 January 2011 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is inadequate.

#### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is inadequate.

- Although achievement is outstanding in the sixth form and satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 4, achievement is inadequate in Key Stage 3.
- By the end of their A level, sixth-form students consistently meet or exceed their challenging targets and retention rates are very high.
- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average and reflects satisfactory progress. Not enough of the more able students attain the highest grades at GCSE. In part, this is because GCSE students receive fewer hours of history teaching over the duration of their course than is usually seen in other schools.
- Progress in Key Stage 3 is inadequate because too many lessons are inadequate or barely satisfactory. While students develop some good in-depth knowledge of topics, such as the Romans or trench conditions in the

First World War, their understanding of key historical concepts and processes is weak.

- History makes a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development. Students enjoy history. Take-up at GCSE has increased in recent years and is now well above the national average. However, while students usually behave well, behaviour deteriorates in the less effective lessons and in some instances is inadequate.

### **Quality of teaching in history**

The quality of teaching in history is inadequate.

- Although teaching is usually good in the examination classes, and of a consistently high quality at A level, too much teaching in Key Stage 3 is inadequate.
- In the inadequate lessons, tasks are not challenging enough because teachers underestimate what students of all abilities should and could achieve. Learning objectives are dull and fail to challenge and inspire students.
- While assessment is used well to prepare students for public examinations, its use is inadequate in Key Stage 3. Younger students know their numerical levels and targets, but have no understanding of what these mean in terms of their historical knowledge and understanding. Target-setting is of poor quality and rarely relates to the development of students' subject-specific skills. Marking is undertaken conscientiously; however, it has little impact in accelerating students' progress.
- Lesson plans identify which students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but do not articulate with sufficient clarity how these students will be supported. Similarly, teachers' planning does not always ensure that learning support assistants are used effectively.

### **Quality of the curriculum in history**

The quality of the curriculum in history is inadequate.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum does not yet meet the requirements of the revised National Curriculum. Although opportunities to study topics in depth are good, provision for thematic and overview studies is extremely limited. There are also significant omissions with regard to some aspects of British history. For example, different histories and changing relationships through time of the people of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales are not covered. Similarly, the impact through time of movement and settlement of diverse peoples to, from and within the British Isles is not covered.
- Curriculum planning at Key Stage 3 fails to articulate how students will develop their subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding. This, in part, explains why too much teaching in Key Stage 3 lacks sufficient momentum, purpose and challenge.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in history**

Leadership and management in history are inadequate.

- The department has done well to maintain satisfactory progress at GCSE and outstanding progress at A level despite the long-term absence of the subject leader and turbulence in staffing which has required the appointment of temporary staff.
- However, interim arrangements have not given the department sufficient capacity to drive improvement and eliminate key weaknesses. Hence, strategies to improve the weakest teaching have not been sufficiently effective. Similarly, the department has not incorporated the requirements of the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum into curriculum planning.
- Although a number of useful priorities have been identified, the departmental improvement plan does not link these sufficiently to driving up achievement for students in Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. Targets are not sufficiently well defined to enable leaders and managers to measure the impact of changes to provision on outcomes for students.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- raising achievement at Key Stage 3 by:
  - ensuring that more lessons secure good and outstanding progress and eradicating incidents of inadequate teaching
  - improving the quality of marking and assessment so that teachers and their students know precisely how well they are doing and how to improve
  - ensuring curriculum planning articulates clearly how students will develop their subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding
  - ensuring the curriculum meets requirements fully
- increasing the proportion of students attaining grades A and A\* in GCSE history.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Daniel Burton**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**