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Ms C Considine
Headteacher
Bordesley Green Girls' School
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Dear Ms Considine

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 9 and 10 November 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Attainment is above average and the proportion of students who attain the highest grades of A* to C is high. Students make outstanding progress through the school, given their below average attainment on entry. Students invariably achieve, and often exceed, their predicted grades.
- Students say their lessons are stimulating and often good fun. They are motivated to do well and work hard. Students spoke confidently about what they thought they were learning by studying history, such as 'how things got to be the way they are today', and also about the key issues that still influence contemporary events. They used good examples from their current work, especially about linking aspects of power and authority at various times in the past to the modern world.

- Historical skills are being developed extremely well, although in Years 7 and 8 the skills required to analyse sources are not developed quickly enough. The development of literacy is a real strength of written work and independent learning projects.
- Students have confidence to ask questions in class and collaborate well in pairs and small group discussions. They speak well when asked to report back to the whole class.
- Students' personal development in history is outstanding. They are highly motivated and fully engaged in their learning. They behave extremely well. The contribution of history to the development of students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is also excellent.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is extremely good and they engage students well in lessons.
- Lessons are planned very well, have clear learning objectives and are suitably varied and challenging for students. There is a high level of consistency in the quality of lesson planning for all teachers.
- Work is marked carefully and accurately and students are kept informed regularly about how well they are doing. The department uses its excellent bank of support materials extremely well to enable all groups of students to enjoy their history. Formal assessments are planned particularly well and students said that they enjoy these tasks. Constant feedback, both in lessons and in specially designed assessment booklets, enables students to know exactly how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve. Parents are also kept very well informed about their children's progress.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is outstanding.

- The school has developed a Key Stage 3 curriculum that matches students' needs extremely well. It is well considered and linked very carefully to regular assessments.
- The emphasis on developing students' historical knowledge and understanding is excellent. These aspects, and particularly literacy, are strengthened in other subjects when the focus is on a history topic, for example with the languages department where a history topic is often used as a good context for language and reading development.
- The school organises an excellent range of visits to places of historical interest locally as well as nationally and abroad. Students say that they enjoy these opportunities to extend their learning and understanding. They particularly liked the visits to Kenilworth Castle and the Imperial War and Natural History museums in London. They really enjoyed the work that was generated by the school's Black History Month.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- The head of department, who is also head of humanities, has developed an excellent team of enthusiastic and committed history teachers. The department has focused extremely well on securing high attainment. The excellent work undertaken on assessment procedures and approaches in lessons is exemplary and is being used by the school as an exemplar for other subjects to follow.
- All teachers have a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the subject. The department's self-evaluation, which is part of the humanities' self-evaluation process, is sharp, accurate and succinct.
- The head of department's action research has been used by the local authority in its report of good practice in schools.
- The subject is organised extremely well and all resources are used very effectively.
- The subject is well regarded within this outstanding school and its popularity with students is evident in the large, and growing, number of students opting for history at GCSE.

Area for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that students' skills in analysing sources are developed more quickly in Years 7 and 8.

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

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector