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Mr P Frazer  
Principal  
Airedale High School  
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Dear Mr Frazer

### **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 3 and 4 March 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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- Students make good progress in both key stages and reach average standards by the end of Year 11. Their prior attainment on entry to the school is consistently below average and in some years has been well below. However, students' progress accelerates over time and inspection evidence demonstrates that those in the current Year 11 are again on track to meet their challenging targets. Although improving, boys' attainment lags behind that of girls.
- Students in Year 7 demonstrate a good awareness of the different kinds of evidence that historians use to make their judgements and make convincing comments about sources which can be considered as both

primary and secondary. In Year 9, they already see the value of the study of history as a tool for challenging prejudice and comment on the importance of, in their words, 'considering both sides of the story before offering an opinion'. In the GCSE years, they show an impressive understanding and give examples of why the past can be interpreted in different ways. They make particularly pertinent comments about the dangers of propaganda and bias.

- Students' personal development is good. The overwhelming majority behave well in class and are generally fully engaged in their learning. Their enjoyment of history is increasing apace and, during the past three years, the proportion of the cohort opting for GCSE courses has increased from below to above the national average..

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

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers have secure historical knowledge and are passionate about their subject. They have high expectations of what their students can achieve, demonstrate impressive behaviour management, and use a range of teaching methods to meet their learning needs.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- As a result of teachers' recognition that boys do not always reach the same standards as girls, modifications in lesson content and delivery have been introduced to engage boys more in their learning. These are now starting to bear fruit and boys' attainment is beginning to rise.
- Assessment is good; teachers have an accurate understanding of performance data and track students' progress closely. Marking is regular and often detailed but its quality is inconsistent, particularly in relation to the advice that students receive on how to improve their work. Nonetheless, there are many examples of students having a clear awareness of their targets and of what they need to do to reach them.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good care, guidance and support for their students. As a result, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers and are often enabled to make extended contributions to discussion in class and also to present their work to their classmates.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- Students benefit from both a discrete period of history and significant elements of the subject as part of the well-founded 'Discover' scheme in Year 7. Indeed, the opportunities for students to pursue their own personal research under the Independent Learning Project are outstanding: students have produced DVDs on change and continuity in family history and accurate comparisons of schools today and in bygone

years. They have also composed their own slave songs as part of Black History Month.

- Students can opt for GCSE study in history at the end of Year 8 and opportunities are also available for early examination entry at the end of Year 10. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and students speak highly of the visit to the battlefields of the First World War and also to the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- Under the auspices of the relatively new head of department, increasing numbers of students are opting for external examination courses in history. Supported strongly by her mentor, the head of department has produced a detailed self-evaluation form, which is accurate in its judgements on performance and which emphasises the leadership's ambition for both students and staff working within the department. However, monitoring and evaluation strategies have yet to ensure that procedures are fully embedded across the department.
- Teachers within the 'Discover' initiative speak positively of the support and advice they receive from the department on history skills and content. They also learn much from departmental staff on how students' progress can be gauged with accuracy.
- There is a clear vision for how the department is to develop. Staff also reach out to families and invite parents and carers into school to share in the successes of their children in their study of history.

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

- continuing to develop the strategies already introduced to engage boys in their learning to consolidate the acceleration in their attainment
- further developing monitoring and evaluation to address inconsistencies in departmental procedures.

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

**Jim Kidd**  
**Additional Inspector**