

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



18 February 2011

Mrs S Schwartz
Headteacher
Brockhill Park Performing Arts College
Sandling Road
Saltwood
Kent
CT21 4HL

Dear Mrs Schwartz

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 7 and 8 February 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is inadequate.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is inadequate.

- Students demonstrate some good knowledge and understanding of some topics studied in depth, for example, through their studies of life in a Roman villa or the transatlantic slave trade. They are often very enthusiastic about history, which is reflected in their excellent art and design work in constructing models, for example of the Colosseum and Roman or medieval methods of warfare.
- However, while students make satisfactory progress overall in lessons, attainment is low by the end of Year 8 for the very large majority of students who prefer to choose subjects other than history from Year 9 onwards.
- From low starting points, in part as a result of the low levels of literacy, these students do not secure sufficient gains in history by the time they

finish their studies because of restricted curriculum time and teaching which is not consistently good or better. While school data for current students indicate that attainment is rising by the end of Key Stage 3, data are not yet sufficiently grounded in rigorous analysis of students' gains in developing their history-specific skills.

- Effective strategies to raise the attainment of the very small minority of students who pursue history as part of their GCSE humanities course are proving to be effective and attainment for these students is average and rising strongly.
- History makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. Most report that they enjoy history, and behaviour is usually good or better. However, when teaching is less engaging, some students become less focused with the result that they inhibit, significantly, their own and others' learning.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is satisfactory.

- There is some good and outstanding teaching but also satisfactory and inadequate teaching in history.
- In the best lessons, learning is enhanced by teachers' use of a range of engaging activities coupled with appropriately high expectations with regard to behaviour. In these lessons, students thrive. They relish opportunities to work together and routinely make good progress when such opportunities are carefully planned, well paced and challenging. In these lessons, teachers skilfully use their knowledge of students' individual abilities to ensure that learning is very closely matched to individual needs. Good use is made of other adults to support the learning of individuals and the whole group.
- However, even in some of the most effective lessons, progress is inhibited because assessment criteria shared with the students are not sufficiently rooted in discrete history-specific skills.
- Teachers commonly make effective use of digital resources, such as the interactive whiteboard, to promote learning, though on occasions this lends itself to a presentational style of teaching where learners are expected to listen to the teacher for too long.
- The less effective lessons fail to sufficiently motivate students to do their best and activities are not sufficiently engaging. In these lessons, teachers' expectations of behaviour are not sufficiently high and the pace of learning is inadequate.
- The quality of marking is extremely variable and in most lessons, unsatisfactory. Too much marking is of a cursory nature with insufficient focus on strategies for improvement. In some instances, work is awarded a National Curriculum level with no explanation of what the level means, how it has been achieved, or what the next steps in learning are. This, in part, explains why students have an inconsistent understanding of how well they are doing in history. Teachers do not mark routinely against clear

subject-specific targets to enable students to have a clear understanding of their progress and attainment in history.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is inadequate.

- The curriculum has a number of key strengths. Given the time available, it has been tailored effectively to ensure that most requirements of the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum for history are met. Opportunities to study the history of non-European cultures are good, for example through studies of Chinese history and Islamic civilisations. Good links are made with other subjects, particularly citizenship, to help contextualise some of the issues studied in history, for example, women's suffrage.
- The lack of sufficient curriculum time in Key Stage 3 for history, however, means that, despite students' satisfactory progress overall in lessons, their attainment by the end of the key stage is low.
- The coverage of some vital elements of British history is insufficient. For example, there is no coverage of the development of political power from the middle ages to the 20th century, including changes in the relationship between the rulers and ruled over time, the changing relationship between Crown and Parliament and the development of democracy. This, in part, is because the curriculum gives no coverage to some of the key periods in which these changes took place.
- There is also no coverage of British Isles history in Key Stage 3, and particularly the requirement that students study the histories and changing relationships through time of the peoples of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- While leaders and managers have mapped out a course in Key Stage 3 which pays some regard to how historical skills will be developed, planning for progression does not give sufficient regard to the revised Key Stage 3 National Curriculum.
- The curriculum is enhanced by appropriate provision for enrichment. For example, past and current students are given the opportunity to visit sites and museums of historical interest such as the Imperial War Museum and Canterbury Cathedral.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

Leadership and management in history are satisfactory.

- The subject leader is very well organised and the department runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. This is no mean feat given the large number of staff who teach history, including non-specialists. These teachers are supported well through well-organised schemes of work and teachers' willingness to share resources.
- While the curriculum does not yet meet requirements in Key Stage 3, the subject leader has maximised the use of curriculum time available in terms

of historical content. However, this has not been sufficient to ensure that full coverage is given to key areas of British history.

- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of achievement in history in Key Stage 4 as part of students' GCSE humanities course. Strategies to halt low attainment by the end of Year 11 are now having a clear impact.
- Strategies to increase the proportions of good and outstanding teaching and to improve the quality of marking have not yet been sufficiently effective.
- Leaders and managers have correctly identified the areas in most need of attention and plans are in place to address the weaknesses identified in the curriculum from September 2011.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that students are given sufficient curriculum time in history to fully develop their subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding
- ensuring that all lessons secure good and better progress and eliminate incidents of inadequate teaching in history by increasing opportunities to share the best practice
- strengthening the use of assessment so that leaders and managers have a more precise understanding of how students are progressing in developing discrete history-specific skills
- improving the quality of marking so that students have a clear understanding of how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve and how to do it.

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