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Mr A Fulbrook  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Fulbrook

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: history**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 5 and 6 October 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 you, staff and students; a scrutiny of relevant documentation; an analysis of students' work; and the observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is satisfactory.

- From relatively low starting points, students make good progress in their learning but their attainment is significantly below the national average. There have been marked improvements to examination results in the recent past. In 2009, only 29% attained at least grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations but this figure has risen to 47% in 2011. This is because of the many positive changes being implemented within the department.
- In Key Stage 3, students are developing well their historical knowledge and understanding. For example, Year 9 students have a sound understanding of events leading to the outbreak of the First World War, while those at Key Stage 4 understand the importance of the welfare reforms of the Liberal government in the early 20th Century.

- At all ages, students are working competently with historical sources. They ask relevant questions and can draw reasoned conclusions about the past. They can reflect and debate about the relative importance of different sources. These sources, however, are sometimes limited in range.
- Most students have a sound understanding of chronology and are beginning to understand changes over long periods of time.
- Students are curious about the past and enjoy studying the subject. Their attitudes and behaviour are good and often outstanding. They work well with each other and with the adults.

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

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Lessons are characterised by good relationships based on mutual trust and respect between the students and the adults. Time is used well. Teachers introduce topics and stimulate students' interest through appropriate electronic presentations.
- Questioning is brisk and the teachers' good knowledge extends the students' understanding. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, students' knowledge and understanding about the claimants to the English throne in the 11th Century were extended well through the teachers' questioning.
- Students' work is regularly marked and targets for improvement are identified.
- Planning is generally detailed. Learning outcomes are identified and shared with the students. However, targets for those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are gifted and talented are not always explicitly incorporated within the lesson planning. As a result, students' progress towards meeting the targets is not always properly monitored, either by the teacher or the teaching assistant.
- Independent learning skills are promoted generally well, including work in pairs and through the setting of research work. However, information and communication technology is not routinely used by the students.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is broad and meets requirements. Students are enabled to learn key concepts and processes. However, the curriculum is imbalanced at Key Stage 3. There is too much emphasis in Year 9 on the two world wars, leading to uneven coverage of other aspects, for example local history.
- At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is made relevant through the study of modern world history. It offers progression from what has been learnt in Key Stage 3.

- Students are being offered a growing range of enrichment experiences. Those in Key Stage 4 visit the battlefields in Normandy and students in Year 9 visit the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject is led and managed well, and staff morale is high. The common sense of purpose in the department and the positive changes which have been implemented recently have led to marked improvements in provision and students' attainment. As a result, the subject is becoming more popular within the school.
- Appropriate priorities have been identified in the subject improvement plan. There is an accurate understanding of the subject's strengths and weaknesses through the school's procedures for quality assurance. Lessons are regularly observed and whole-school monitoring of students' progress in history identifies strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate action is taken where necessary to enhance the students' progress. Weaknesses within the department are being systematically tackled.

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

- ensuring that there is closer monitoring by the teachers and teaching assistants of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified as gifted and talented so that they make much more rapid progress and achieve the targets set for them
- ensuring that students' skills in information and communication technology are enhanced by the subject
- ensuring that the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is better balanced.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Champak Chauhan**  
**Additional Inspector**