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Dr J Roberts  
Headteacher  
The Coventry Blue Coat CofE School  
and Music College  
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Dear Dr Roberts

### **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 18 and 19 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 staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Attainment is high throughout the school and students of all abilities and groups make excellent progress in developing their historical skills and understanding. Students engage enthusiastically in a wide range of stimulating activities both inside and outside the classroom, such as finding out from survivors of the Blitz in Coventry what life was like during the Second World War. Students in the sixth form enjoy learning about the Tudors and aspects of the modern world and they achieve extremely well.
- Students' personal development is outstanding in history. One student, who had not liked history in her previous school, found 'history here is just so challenging and thought-provoking'. Students like learning about the past to compare it with the present. They are able to talk extremely well about the events and people they have studied.

- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and students learn well both in groups and on their own. They demonstrate a thirst to know as much about history topics as they can.
- Students are encouraged to present their work and ideas clearly to the rest of their group and then the whole class. They do this extremely well and with confidence.

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

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- All teachers are qualified history specialists and they use their excellent subject knowledge extremely well to plan dynamic and engaging lesson activities which enable students to make rapid progress in learning about the key concepts and skills through each key stage.
- Teachers develop excellent relationships with students. There is a constant challenge for students to achieve their best in lessons. All teachers encourage students to reflect carefully about how to interrogate evidence to write well analytically and to use different kinds of evidence to support their arguments. Throughout the key stages students learn to perfect their understanding of interpretation and causation.
- Teachers use an extremely good and wide range of approaches to enable students to think carefully about their work and how to develop their literacy skills. Students have excellent opportunities to argue with each other and to write discursively in essays and other forms of extended writing.
- Teachers make excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve students' learning. For example, students are encouraged to demonstrate their thoughts on interactive whiteboards and to use the computers available to access the department's bank of resources to research topics and tasks.
- The assessment of work is excellent, but although most students' work is marked clearly and very well, not all students fully understand from teachers' comments how to improve their work and what to do to improve at a faster rate.

### **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 thought out and linked very carefully to regular assessments. Where students have undertaken a two-year programme they can opt to study history to GCSE in one year, and they do this very successfully. You are clear that history will be a key programme of study for students at GCSE, should they wish to opt for it, which they do in increasing numbers.
- The emphasis on developing students' historical knowledge and understanding is outstanding. These aspects are strengthened by strong

and well-planned links with other subjects, such as modern foreign languages when students study French influence following the battle of Hastings or French culture at the time of the French Revolution. There are also very good links with the school's music specialism.

- The department organises an excellent range of visits to places of historical interest locally, as well as nationally and abroad.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is outstanding.

- The head of department is an impressive subject leader and manager. She has an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of her department, which the sharp and clear departmental self-evaluation demonstrates extremely well. The subject is monitored rigorously and subject evaluations and improvement plans indicate clearly how teachers simply cannot sit on their laurels, no matter how experienced they are within the school.
- A constant drive to improve teaching approaches is reinforced by the school's strong links with university tutors and teacher training programmes at two nearby universities. Two members of the department have undertaken active research projects which are having a demonstrably positive effect on the performance of the department.
- The monitoring of teaching is highly effective and is supported by regular work reviews and discussions with students.

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

- making sure that teachers' comments in books and files are fully understood by students so that all of them know clearly what they have to do to improve their work and understand how well they are doing over time.

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.

Yours sincerely

**Peter Limm**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**