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Dear Mr Mohammed

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 10 and 11 May 2012 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 six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Students have relatively low prior attainment when they start school but they make good progress over time in history because of the quality of teaching they experience. Results in the GCSE examinations at grades A* to C have continued to be above national averages.
- Students develop their historical knowledge and understanding well. In Year 7, for example, they are developing a good understanding of the causes and consequences of the Norman invasion of England in 1066.
- As they get older, students are able to evaluate a wider range of historical sources. They are able to think critically about the sources and topics being studied and they can make independent judgements about them. Students in Key Stage 4 can reflect and debate about key events at a

sophisticated level, for example appeasement and the role of Neville Chamberlain.

- Students enjoy history, are curious about the past and want to learn more. Year 9 students, for instance, have a good understanding of why some adults became conscientious objectors during the First World War.
- Students are developing good chronological understanding. They are aware of changes to British society over long periods of time.
- Many students, especially the higher attainers and those in Key Stage 4, can write extensively. Students can substantiate particular arguments and can appreciate different points of view.
- Students are polite and courteous, and they are invariably well behaved. They maintain their concentration on the tasks set and work well with each other and with adults.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Lessons are planned in detail and learning objectives are shared with the students.
- Lessons are characterised by a good range of learning activities which enables all students to make good progress. In-depth research is fostered well as students get older and some good extended writing, for example about aspects of Nazi Germany, is evident in Year 11.
- Lessons provide a good learning environment, based on realistically high expectations by the staff. Class discussions are of a high standard.
- The specialist historians have excellent subject knowledge and they use this well to extend students' knowledge and understanding. This is reflected in the marking of students' work and in the high-quality classroom discussions about historical events.
- Teachers mark students' work conscientiously. Appropriate evaluative comments are usually made and subject-specific targets for improvement sometimes identified. However, approaches to these are inconsistent between different teachers.
- Some classes use information and communication technology for research purposes on a regular basis but others do not.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets requirements.
- Students benefit from good opportunities to learn about important historical events. The organisation of the curriculum ensures good continuity and progression over the years.
- Students' moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Students regularly tackle issues of right and wrong. Aspects of ethnic and

cultural diversity are skilfully interwoven into schemes of work. As a result, students have good understanding of the roles of different ethnic groups in important events, for example the contribution of Indian soldiers to trench warfare during the First World War.

- Students' experiences are enriched by visits to places of historical interest. Year 8 students, for example, visit Warwick Castle while those in Year 10 visit the Imperial War Museum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject is well led and managed. A clear and shared vision exists for the development of the subject. Staff have a good team spirit and morale is high.
- The curriculum coordinator knows the strengths and weaknesses of the subject well, due to thorough procedures for quality assurance; robust action is taken to address weaknesses.
- Comprehensive procedures have been adopted to monitor students' progress. This is tracked regularly; underachievers are quickly identified and appropriate action is taken.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that marking and assessment procedures regularly identify subject-specific targets for improvement for the students and that students' progress towards these targets is routinely evaluated
- ensuring that students' skills in information and communication technology are enhanced consistently in all year groups through the more explicit planning and teaching of them.

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