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4 July 2012

Miss A Heaton  
Headteacher  
Meols Cop High School  
Meols Cop Road  
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Dear Miss Heaton,

### **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 25 and 26 June 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 staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is good.

- Attainment and achievement at Key Stage 4 is good. For current Year 11 students, examinations already taken and controlled assignments already marked indicate that results in 2012 for GCSE at grades A\* to C are likely to improve significantly. Scrutiny of written work and observation of Year 10 lessons confirms that students are making good progress and that their attainment levels are high.
- Students' progress at Key Stage 3 is good, with almost all students on target and many above target. Students are developing a good knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. Gaps between distinctive groups of students have been significantly narrowed.
- History makes a good contribution to students' personal development. Students say they are challenged by their history studies and feel very

enthusiastic about the subject. Well organised and resourced group work has enhanced a cooperative spirit within all teaching groups.

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

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, are very enthusiastic about the subject and highly reflective about their work. Lessons are characterised by good pace, lively engagement that includes all students, high expectations and exhilarating and challenging student-centred activities. Data are used well for lesson planning. Group activities are very well matched to students' abilities.
- The typical qualities of teaching within the department were exemplified in a Year 9 lesson on rationing during the Second World War. Students were highly focused and worked very hard at sifting and evaluating evidence. Groups discussed the quality of the evidence, possible interpretations and conclusions. Feedback was thorough and well informed. Consequently, students made very good progress in understanding the nature and impact of rationing.
- Students' work is marked regularly and it is swiftly returned to them. It makes clear what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, marking does not routinely provide opportunities for students to respond to teachers' verbal and written comments and engage in a dialogue of learning and assessment.

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

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The history curriculum at Key Stage 3 is challenging and enables students to build good foundations and understanding of historical concepts and processes. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' written work demonstrates that students are developing their historical knowledge and deepening their historical thinking and understanding. Above all they enjoy history and find it challenging and enriching.
- The use of information and computer technology (ICT) is good, although the resources on the virtual learning environment (VLE) facility for Key Stage 3 students do not yet match the quality of those for Key Stage 4 students.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students at Key Stage 4 well. Students are making good progress because they find topics interesting and challenging. The three hours a week allocation for history for Key Stage 4 students is supplemented by well-attended additional sessions after school and sometimes on Saturday mornings. The department has established good curriculum links with other areas such as drama, sports, English and geography to extend, enhance and enrich the students' experiences.
- Enrichment opportunities are good and developing under new departmental leadership. A strong focus is on visiting local museums and

historical sites in Liverpool, Manchester and other parts of Lancashire. The department has recognised, however, the need to develop a range of experiences to enhance students' historical appreciation and experience of wider aspects of British culture. A trip to Berlin is currently being organised to enhance students' appreciation of European history.

- History makes a highly effective contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, students in Year 8 study Civil Rights in America, and those in Year 9 investigate the Holocaust and an exploration of the moral justification for dropping the atomic bomb in 1945.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is good.

- The acting head of history leads a motivated team of subject specialists. She has, with gusto, applied herself and her team to the task of raising standards and enthusing students to enjoy and develop a strong interest in history. Standards have improved significantly.
- Self-evaluation is accurate, analytical and realistic. Clear areas for improvements are identified. Two detailed review reports, in the summer and autumn, complement and check on the progress of departmental areas for improvement and objectives established in the self-evaluation report. The management, analysis and use of data to inform improvement strategies are strong and effective.
- The department is run effectively on a day-to-day basis. Staff work together well on sharing lesson planning and the development of high-quality resources. Well-focused continuous professional development enhances teaching, resources development and improvement strategies.

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

- ensuring that marking and assessment practice provides routine opportunities for students to respond to teachers' verbal and written comments and engage in a dialogue of learning and assessment
- developing VLE resources for Key Stage 3 students so that they match those already established for Key Stage 4 students.

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

**Patrick Geraghty**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**