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Mr J Kibble  
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Dear Mr Kibble

### Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 02 and 03 May to look at work in history.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of history, the visit had a particular focus on information and communication technology (ICT) and the gifted and talented.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with the headteacher and the head of department, discussions with pupils and staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and the observation of five lessons. The department is in a period of transition, with a new head of department who has been in post for two terms.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

- Pupils achieve well across Key Stage 3 and many attain standards in Year 9 that are higher than average.

- Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and their recent results in the GCSE examinations are considerably higher than the national average. In 2005, 72% achieved grades A\*-C, with slightly more than half attaining grades A\* and A. In 2006, the situation improved even further with 84% gaining grades A\*-C and 43% gaining A\* and A grades.
- In the sixth form, students in the past have made satisfactory progress. Results in the AS and A-level examinations have been slightly below national averages. The department has made recent improvements in the curriculum and teaching and students are now beginning to make better progress.
- Across all ages, pupils speak confidently. Many write well for their ages.
- Some pupils are highly motivated and keen to study the subject. About 40% choose to study the subject in Year 10, which is higher than the national average. The popularity of the subject is increasing in the sixth form.

### Quality of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good, enabling pupils to make good progress.

- Planning is conscientiously undertaken and a range of activities in class is usually planned, including group work and work in pairs. There is appropriate challenge for most pupils.
- Relationships in lessons are good. Pupils are interested in the subject and often research topics at home on the computer without being asked to do so.
- Learning objectives are written on the board and routinely shared with the pupils.
- Time is well used and there is usually a reminder to pupils of how much they have for particular activities. This injects appropriate pace to the lesson.
- Some of the marking of work in Key Stage 4 is of a high standard. The teacher identifies what the pupil has done well and what the pupil needs to do to improve this work.
- There was occasionally too much teacher talk, leading to a fall in the pace to the learning. A few pupils were sometimes inattentive.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The department has rudimentary schemes of work for the various study units. These are dated and do not give enough guidance to teachers on how to ensure curriculum continuity and progression for pupils. Staff, including the newly-appointed head of department are aware of the weaknesses and have begun, successfully, to address

these issues. The improvement can now be seen in the curriculum, in teaching and in pupils' progress.

- Visits are made to a few places of historical interest but these are limited.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the department are good.

- The new head of department is dedicated, hard working and has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject.
- There is clear and appropriate direction on how the subject should be developed in the future. The head of department is aware that schemes of work need to be developed and action is already being taken to improve these and assessment procedures.

## Subject issue: ICT

The subject has one interactive whiteboard which does not always work properly. Classrooms are not yet networked and the department does not have access to enough free-standing computers. Classes can go to the Resource Centre which has computers but this is not always possible because of pressure from other subjects. Pupils' skills in ICT are not being sufficiently developed by the subject.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in history is satisfactory.

- The department produces specialised work for lower ability groups and pupils can usually access this well. However, the needs of some pupils are not routinely identified in lesson planning and the role of the learning support assistant is not always specified.
- The department is aware of those pupils who are gifted and talented. Some have a fascination for history and more needs to be done to harness this in routine lesson planning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving standards in the AS and A-level examinations
- improving curriculum planning and ensuring that detailed and relevant schemes of work are produced for all ages
- ensuring that the needs of the lower attainers and those who are gifted and talented are better met in lessons
- ensuring that pupils' skills in ICT are routinely developed by the subject.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Champak Chauhan  
Her Majesty's Inspector