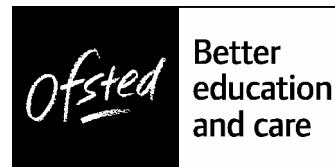


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21 September 2006

Mr P Rowland
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Rowland

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Wednesday 20 September 2006 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. 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 staff and student, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in history overall are outstanding.

- Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, but in history over recent years students have attained higher results than those nationally at Key Stage 3 and well above at Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 2006 were excellent with 78% attaining 5 A*-C grades including thirteen students who achieved A*. All groups of students make at least good progress and most students make excellent progress overall. There is little difference between the results for girls and boys.
- Students' personal development is excellent in history. Students value their history lessons highly. They are keen and enthusiastic to learn

and behaviour in lessons is excellent. Not surprisingly, history is a very popular option at Key Stage 4.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning in history is outstanding.

- All teachers form excellent relationships with students and adopt a wide range of active strategies to engage and motivate students to achieve their best. Students are encouraged to work productively both independently and in groups. As a consequence, the quality of class discussions and the interactions between teachers and students are consistently excellent.
- Assessment procedures are excellent, based on astute development of the national strategies for assessing learning. The department constantly seeks to improve assessment and it rightly identifies the need to build on its successes by monitoring able students more closely, especially at Key Stage 3, in order to ensure that they are appropriately and consistently stretched and challenged in all lessons.
- Support and guidance in history is excellent. Teaching Assistants are used extremely well to lead and manage learning for identified groups of students.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The department has worked hard to provide a history curriculum which meets the needs of all students. There is an Entry Level Certificate for those students who find mainstream GCSE difficult.
- Particular strengths of the curriculum include a focus on creative and imaginative homework activities, and opportunities to develop extended writing skills. The good achievement of boys demonstrates the positive impact of these opportunities. Students made a particular point of emphasising how much they enjoyed their history lessons and the range of topics they studied. They felt they were being very well prepared for further study of history and the world of work. Topics of study are well chosen so that through their history, students gain a deeper understanding of the world in which they live.
- The department correctly identifies that it needs to improve still further opportunities for using ICT, and exploring ways of engaging students more interactively with whiteboards.
- The department also is aware that curriculum provision could be improved with the development of a history website which would widen the opportunities for individual students to explore their history interests further.

Leadership and management of history

Leadership and management in history are outstanding.

- The head of department has created an excellent environment for learning in history. She has worked extremely hard, with her highly motivated and skilled colleagues, to raise achievement and standards in history.
- Departmental self-evaluation is excellent. The department accurately identifies and exemplifies its many strengths and smaller number of areas for development. It has made excellent progress since the school's last inspection and knows that it has to consolidate as well as build on its current successes.

Subject issue

The history department has placed great emphasis on developing all aspects of literacy, not just writing. This focus has contributed strongly to raising standards in history and to better achievement for boys. These developments have been encouraged and supported by the school in general.

Inclusion

All groups of students make rapid progress in history as a consequence of the high quality of support and guidance and excellent provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- exploring ways of engaging students more interactively with whiteboards when they are used
- continuing to develop assessment for learning strategies in order to consolidate as well as improve standards of attainment
- exploring ways of providing even more stretch and challenge for able students, especially at Key Stage 3
- developing the history web site so that all students can have increased opportunities to follow their history interests further.

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 Local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector