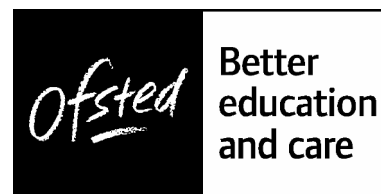


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6644
www.ofsted.gov.uk



09 October 2006

Mrs A Chong
Headteacher
Ribston Hall High School
Stroud Road
Gloucester
GL1 5LE

Dear Mrs Chong

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 and 06 October 2006 to look at work in history.

The visit provided valuable information that 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

- Achievement and standards in history are excellent. Attainment at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is very high in history. GCSE results are consistently well above the national average. There was a slight drop in the highest grades in 2006 – an issue that you have raised with the examination board. You enter a large number of students for GCSE, AS and A2 examinations and they achieve exceptionally well. Progress in history throughout the school is outstanding.
- Attitudes towards history are exceptionally good as is shown by the number of students choosing to study it at GCSE, in the sixth form and

at university. Students say that they really enjoy lessons and they are very clear about why it is beneficial for them to study history.

Individual research based work produced by students in Years 8 and 9 indicates the amount of effort and time devoted to both research and presentation.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in history is outstanding.

- Teaching is very effective in all lessons. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use a wide range of strategies to make learning exciting and enjoyable. Students work independently and in groups. Tasks and resources are varied to support individuals who find the subject more difficult and those who have the ability to reach the very highest standards.
- Teachers are particularly creative and skilled in telling the story of events in the past while also ensuring a development of skills in the use of evidence.
- ICT is used well but it is not available in all classrooms.
- Assessment procedures are exceptionally good. Students know how to improve their work and value the opportunity to participate in peer and self- assessment. Questioning in class is very effective; marking provides helpful advice on how to raise answers to the very highest level.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The humanities specialist status of the school provides a wide- ranging and interesting approach to work in Year 7. The focus on local studies and transition from work in Key Stage 2 is particularly effective.
- Particular strengths of the curriculum include the use of local contexts wherever possible and the strong link with citizenship.
- Examination courses have been well chosen and match the interests of students well. The building of skills from Key Stage 2 to those required by AS and A2 work is particularly well managed.
- Accommodation is an issue and the poor quality of teaching rooms is having some impact on the range of possible activities.

Care and guidance

Care and guidance is outstanding.

- Students enjoy working in a very interesting learning environment where their ideas and opinions really matter.
- Assessment is exceptionally rigorous and supports learning well at all levels.
- Students are given excellent guidance about examination courses and about how to fulfil their potential in the subject.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- This is a reflective and collegiate department that works together very well. It is delivering a very high quality learning experience for students despite the difficulties presented by substandard accommodation.
- The delegation of responsibilities is clear and the departmental SEF shows a clear understanding of the department's strengths and areas for development.
- There is a very clear focus on high standards but not at the expense of enjoyment of the subject.

Literacy

Standards of speaking and listening are very high and teachers encourage students to express their views and debate issues within the subject. Writing skills are developed very well and much of the written work is really impressive. Individuals who have less secure skills in English are supported well. Research skills are good and the library is used well but students do not have enough opportunities to use computers in the classroom.

Inclusion

The majority of students reach their full potential in the subject and the department successfully caters for those with learning disabilities. Students come from many different backgrounds and work together very well. Teachers have high expectations of their students and provide high level of challenge and support.

Areas for improvement, which you have already identified in your SEF, include the need to:

- improve the standard of accommodation
- extend the use of ICT in lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Matthews
Additional Inspector